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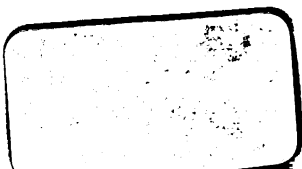
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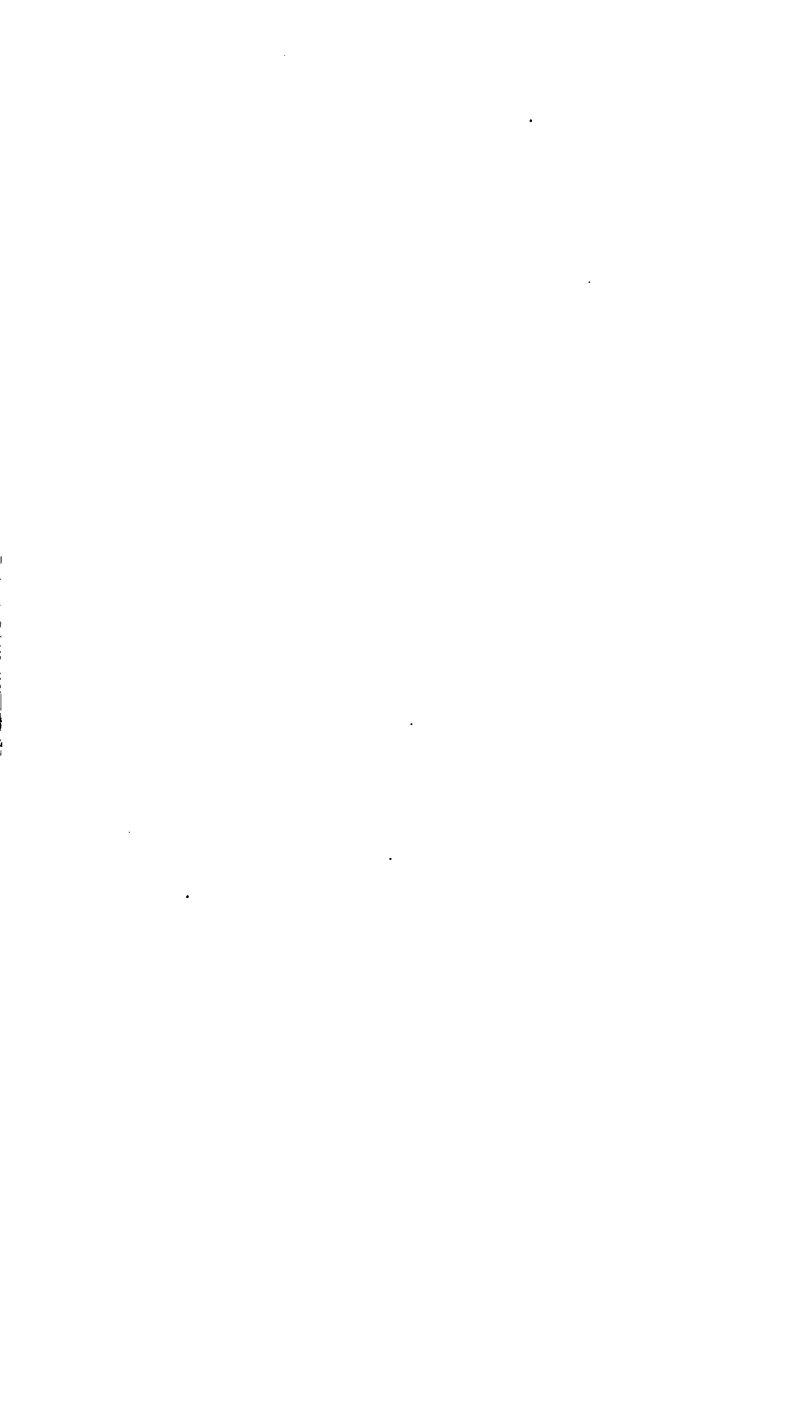
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**THE SECOND COMING,
THE JUDGMENT,
AND
THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.**

**MACINTOSH, PRINTER,
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THE SECOND COMING,
THE JUDGMENT,
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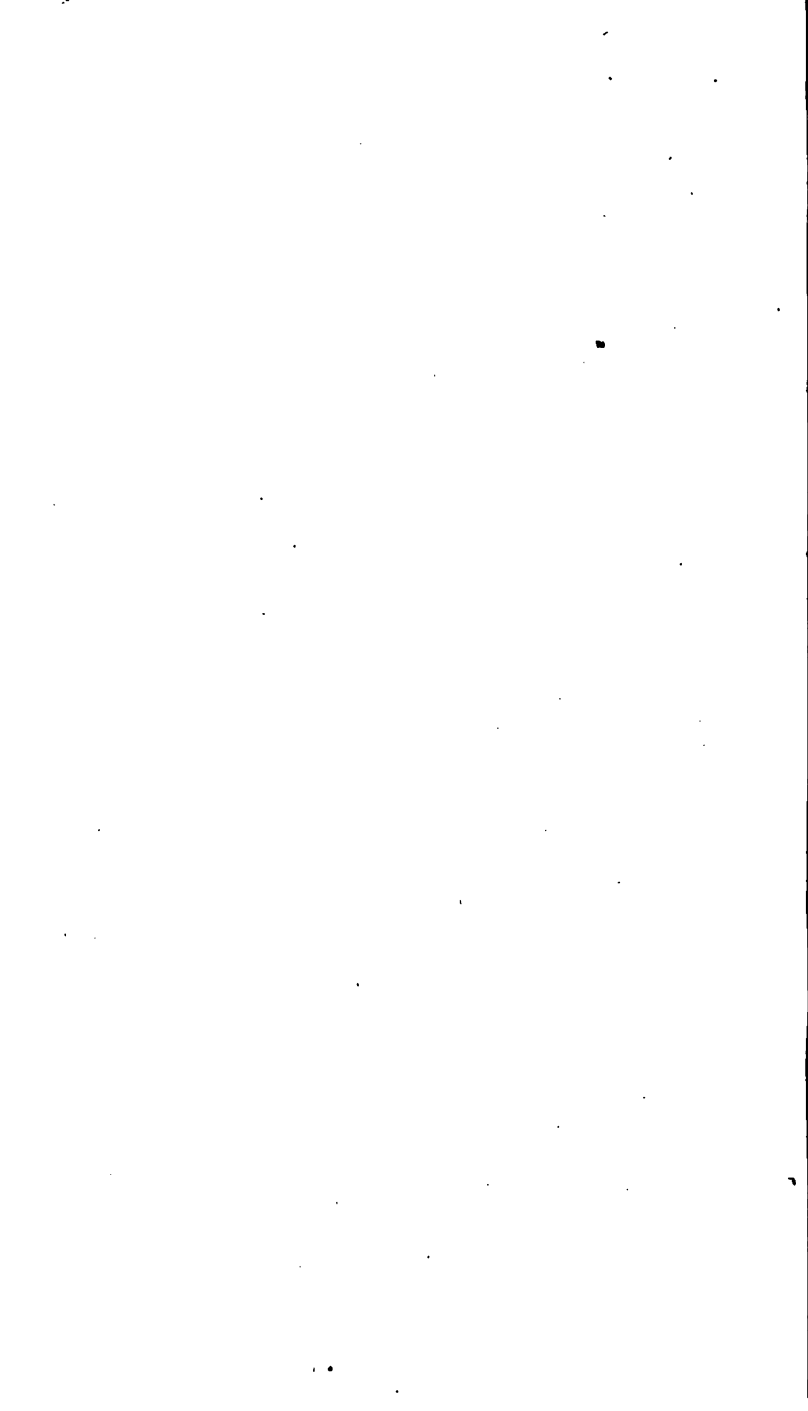
BEING
LECTURES
DELIVERED DURING LENT, 1843,
AT ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY.

By Twelve Clergymen of the Church of England.

WITH A PREFACE,
BY THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,
RECTOR OF WATTON.



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P R E F A C E.

THE following Lectures were preached by the twelve clergymen whose names are attached to each, during the season of Lent in this year (1843), at St. George's, Bloomsbury, and were listened to by crowded and attentive congregations.

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is allowed by all Christians to be a subject of unspeakable importance. THE CERTAINTY OF IT is with them an unquestionable fact. It comes into every creed of the Church. It is continually set before us in the Scriptures as the great object of hope, and the great event to prepare for which our thoughts, and words, and works, should be constantly directed. There needs, then, no apology for this united effort to call the attention of the Church of Christ to this all-important event.

The COURSE OF EVENTS connected with our Lord's return, and THE ORDER in which they shall occur, have occasioned, as might be expected, more

differences of opinion. There are, however, on this part of the subject, many grounds of union and harmony among all Christians, and increasing light may be expected as the day approaches.

The EXACT PERIOD of that coming is more veiled from us in the intended hiddenness of prophecy: our Lord has assured us, *of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* Yet he has directed us on this very account always to watch, and has warned us against the peril of saying, *My Lord delayeth his coming.* He has also led us to hope, that the words of the book are only shut up and sealed to the time of the end, when *many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

It is our hope, that this may be one of the blessed effects of this Course of Lectures. It is highly gratifying to see on how many important principles the brethren who preached them are entirely agreed. They all expect a Millennium yet to come; they all look for the personal coming of our Lord before that Millennium; they all believe the political restoration of Israel to their own land. They look for the first resurrection, and glory of the saints at the coming of our Lord before the Millennium.

There is thus a remarkable general agreement without previous knowledge of what had been said or would be said by each other. May these great truths be established in the mind of the reader, out of the mouths of the witnesses here testifying to them.

No doubt there are minor differences, as there ever have been among the most Orthodox and Evangelical Christians, who equally hold the great and fundamental principles of the Gospel of the grace of God; but this should the more confirm, with a considerate mind, the great truths in which there is so much real unanimity, giving to them all the strength of independent and separate testimony. As to those minor differences, each testimony must stand on its own evidence; and one is not to be held responsible for the sentiments of another, which he has not himself avowed.

We are encouraged by the Apostle Peter to take heed to *the sure word of prophecy as unto a light shining in a dark place*. The darkness seems increasing, the conflict thickening, the dangers of mistake multiplying; all are in perplexity: Oh that it might please God, in these perilous times, to lead his people to take and follow this light, which

dispels the present darkness and cheers them with the approaching beams of a heavenly day !

✓ The signs of the times, apart from all prophecy, are compelling every one's attention. It is clear that everything is shaking, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Spiritual, holy, heavenly things cannot be shaken. *The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* May we follow after these things! *Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming fire.*

Believing that these Lectures are much calculated to promote the reader's edification, I have great pleasure in complying with the request of my brethren in prefixing these remarks. They were blessed of God to those who heard them ; may they be much blessed to the good of all who shall now read them.

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

Watton Rectory, Herts, June 17, 1843.

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LECTURE I.

THE CERTAINTY, NATURE, AND SCRIPTURAL PROMINENCE OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

BY THE
HON. AND REV. H. MONTAGU VILLIERS, M.A.,
RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY.

ACTS I. 11.

“ This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

My Christian friends, I feel it to be a very great privilege to address you on the present occasion. I am sure, that in giving you the opportunity of hearing a course of sermons on the prophetic portion of the Word of God, I am doing my own duty towards you as a minister, and I do heartily pray that these Lectures may be abundantly blessed to the spiritual well-being of a beloved flock.

The subject of prophecy is one which, I am thankful to say, is not altogether new to you. It ought not to be new to any Christian congregation. It is a subject which *may be* abused, and which has been abused, but it forms part of God's Word. The study is not forbidden ;—it is encouraged. The neglect is made a subject of warning, and a special blessing is promised to the study of that prophetic book, which is the Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John.

I could, however, have wished that some Christian brother occupied my post on the present occasion ; for my parochial engagements are such, that I feel I can only give a brief outline of the important subject which has been allotted to me in this course of Lectures, instead of entering deeply into the points as they deserve.

I am to direct your attention this evening to the *certainty*, the *nature*, and the *scriptural prominence* of the doctrine of the second advent of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the Spirit of God rest upon us ! May our eyes be enlightened, and our hearts enlarged, that we may receive the truth, and may grace be given unto us to watch for the return of our absent Lord !

Upon the first head of my subject, it will not be necessary that I detain you for any great length of time. For it is an undoubted fact, that many

persons come to right conclusions, in the matter of unfulfilled prophecy, who, nevertheless, are amongst the most eager in denouncing the propriety of making it a subject of study. So it is in the case before us. Many members of our own Church object to prophetic inquiry, while they do not hesitate, day after day, to repeat the Apostles' Creed, in which we profess to believe that Jesus Christ *shall come to judge the quick and the dead*. This, then, is belief in unfulfilled prophecy: and it surely cannot be deemed right to express our confidence in any truth which we cannot *investigate*. I say, *investigate*, for there are many truths which we must *receive*, though they be above the comprehension of our reason: but the duty of searching the Scriptures is incumbent upon all, and is one of the dearest privileges of a Protestant Church. Now if we investigate the truth of that article of the Creed, we are, in truth, studying unfulfilled prophecy. I may say, then, *in limine*, there is nothing so very presumptuous in venturing to expound the prophetic part of God's Word. Still I may be met by a reply, that the doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment is so plainly set forth, that none can deny its truth; and that is very different from diving into the deep things of God, such as *the nature* of that second coming. I admit the distinction; I deny

the force of the argument. The inquiry *may* be undertaken in an improper spirit. Theories may be started, and students may endeavour to mould Scripture to their own form; instead of making their own prejudices give way to the truth of God's Word. But it is not this, my brethren, which makes prophecy a forbidden subject to so many. It is not the fear of being presumptuous, and thus perishing with Uzzah;—for it cannot be presumptuous to seek to know the will of God, as laid down in his own revealed Word. But I am inclined to believe, that the deceitfulness of the heart of man is displayed here, as in so many other ways, and under the plausible excuse of fearing to infringe upon the Lord's prerogative,—a careless reception of articles of faith is encouraged; and in proportion as truths are carelessly received, so their practical tendency is weakened. Thus it is with the doctrine of the second advent. That Christ will come again is a truth admitted;—and what practical effect does it produce amongst those who shrink from the investigation of prophecy? None whatever. Death is spoken of,—hell is feared; but the joys set forth in the Gospel are completely lost sight of, and the greatest encouragement to holiness of life is given in vain.

But to bring this matter more home to you.

Let me ask those amongst you, who know nothing of prophecy, what definite idea is conveyed to your minds by the article in the Creed to which I have alluded?—Is it not the case, that no definite idea exists? You have floating visions of rewards and punishments;—but happiness may be conferred, or misery may be inflicted, without the presence, the visible presence of Jesus Christ. His omniscience would enable him to distinguish man's deserts; His omnipotence would enable him to apportion to each their part in the world to come.

But if it were possible for any one to set before you the order in which men will be summoned from the grave, to describe to you the nature of the Judge, the signs which will precede his coming,—and if these were shown to you to be now discernible, if they were constantly fixed in your minds,—do you not think that some difference would be produced in your lives and conversation? You admit the certainty of the second coming;—you cannot help it. The very Heathen *show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.* (Rom. ii. 15.) The Scripture leaves you no doubt as to the fact. Angels themselves taught the apostles, in the words of the text, saying, *This same Jesus, which is taken up from*

you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Our Lord himself has said, I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.

I will not, then, speak more of the *certainty* of a second advent of Christ, but will pass on at once to the *nature* of his coming, which must, in some degree, involve the proof of the *certainty* also.

This is, in fact, the disputed point. It is the point upon which turns the controversy between men, both of whom assent to the truth of the second coming, and both of whom are confident that they have Scripture on their side.

Before I can hope to bring you all to entertain the same view of the subject that I could wish, I must set before you, briefly, the right method of interpreting Scripture. One great cause of the difference of the views which good men entertain upon this subject, is the departing from the plain and literal interpretation of the Word of God. In general terms, I may lay it down as an axiom, that when Scripture will yield a plain sense, prophetic language is always to be taken *literally*. This, however, is not, or rather, I would say, *has not been*, strictly attended to; and thus we find men, good men, pious men, explaining literally the denunciations of wrath against the Jew,

and interpreting spiritually the promises yet unfulfilled. They insist much upon the blindness of the Jew in not acknowledging the promises concerning *the first* advent, literally fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, while they are not less sparing in their exclamations against those who expect the prophecies of the second advent to be fulfilled in a manner no less literal. Thus, good Bishop Hall speaks of interpreting "the large privileges and marvellous achievements of restored Israel in a gross and carnal sense, whereas," as he says, "they express, by an usual allegory, God's gracious purposes to the Church under the Gospel." On the other hand, we have the authority of no less a writer than Bishop Horsley, that "the sense of prophecy in general is to be sought in the events which have actually taken place." And the judicious Hooker, in a well-known passage, says, "Hold it for a most infallible rule, in exposition of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing," he continues, "more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changes the meaning of words, as Alchymes does, or would do, the substance of metals, makes of anything what it lists, and in the end brings all truth to nothing."

I do not now enter further into proofs of the

correctness of this mode of interpreting Scripture,—it would lead me too far away from my subject; I merely, once more, lay it down as an axiom, that God's Word must be taken as any other authentic record, and that we are not to expect to find in the Word of God that which we should count as deception in the writings of man;—that when the Scriptures speak of the re-gathering of Israel, they mean Israel;—when they speak of Jerusalem, they do not mean the Church of Christ, but Jerusalem;—when they speak of the throne of David, they do not mean the hearts of Christ's people, but the seat of power and authority of David.

To return, then, to the *nature* of the second advent, I remark, first, that by the second coming is not meant a *providential coming*—a coming such as at the destruction of Jerusalem. We read, for instance (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30), *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken : and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* Now this passage, coming, as it does, in the middle of the conversation of our

blessed Lord and his disciples, who had inquired of him concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, has not unnaturally caused many to suppose that our Lord still was referring to the same period; whereas a little closer examination will lead us to see, that our Lord is desirous of preventing the confusion which might otherwise arise in the minds of his people. He shows in the previous verses, that when men shall see the *abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, that then great dangers would arise and imminent destruction would await the Jews. This commenced, indeed, with the destruction of their city. It continues during the present age; which is elsewhere (Luke xxi. 24) spoken of as *the times of the Gentiles*; and again (Rom. xi. 12), as *the fulness of the Gentiles*; and then we are told, as in the passage I have quoted from Matthew, "Immediately AFTER the tribulation of those days" "shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Now we cannot suppose, that what is described as happening AFTER those days is intended to be understood as happening DURING those days; and, therefore, we conclude, that the coming of the Son of man is *not* to be explained by the providential dealings of God at the destruction of Jerusalem. The whole line of argument upon this question is

the same as that of St. Paul, in Heb. iv., in which he exhorts the Hebrews, lest, a promise being left of entering into rest, any should seem to come short of it. The apostle then proves, that that rest is yet future, by a train of reasoning showing that the rest, though typified by things already come to pass, was not *the* rest referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures, but that the Joshua of the Christians should lead believers into Canaan, a land which should be theirs for ever.

I would further remark, that the coming of the Son of man is not a *spiritual* coming. I have already glanced at this interpretation. This is, perhaps, the more common explanation of the second coming;—it is not the less erroneous upon that account. Common errors are errors still. It is not, I say, a *spiritual* coming; that is, Christ's advent does not mean dwelling in the hearts of his people. This coming, be it what it may, is *future*. We all believe that Christ *will* come, that he is not *here now*; and yet he says, *Lo, I am with you always*. In other words, the Saviour may be supposed to say, “I *am* with you spiritually, and I will continue with you *spiritually*, but the Son of man shall come again immediately after the tribulation which awaits the people of Israel.” Again, the people of God are represented by St. Paul as looking for the appearing of

their Lord, and yet no one can be a child of God who has not the Spirit of God dwelling in him. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.* Consequently, the Son of man is actually present with us by his Spirit *now*, and therefore that cannot refer to the same presence as that spoken of when we declare that we look for his appearing, and that our belief is, that he will come again. It may be replied, that we express our belief that he will come again to judge the quick and the dead. But this does not alter the question of his return. If it be only presence by his Spirit, he is here now. If it be only presence by his Providence, he is here now. But the expression in the Creed refers to a presence different from that which is *now*, but which shall be *hereafter*. Therefore I am brought to the conclusion that a *personal presence* is to be expected. This at least is *possible*. Prejudice may cause some to doubt the *probability*, but the possibility cannot be denied, for if God could send his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh at the first advent, there can be no reason for denying that it is possible the second advent may also be a *personal* coming in the flesh. Indeed the Scriptures do not admit of our disputing this point, *for with God all things are possible.*

I will then advance another step. A personal advent is *probable*. This I would maintain, first,

from the fact of the prophecies concerning our Redeemer already fulfilled, having been fulfilled personally. Christ is revealed to us in the character of *Prophet, Priest, and King*. The two former offices have been literally discharged in the person of the Man Christ Jesus. It is probable that the third office will be also filled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews. This is confirmed by Zech. vi. 12, 13, "*Speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man, whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" Again, turn to Psalm cx. 1, 2, you will read, "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*" Again: few of us, I am sure, doubt that it is the revealed purpose of God to convert Israel, and to regather them out of all lands whither they have been driven, and restore them to their own land. It requires but little knowledge of the Bible to know *that* portion of the prophetic word: I will not, therefore, quote

passages at length. (You can refer at your leisure to Ezekiel xxxvi., xxxvii., xxxix., in the Old Testament, and Romans xi. in the New Testament.) At the present time, i. e., during the period preceding the time appointed for the general conversion of the ancient people of God, there is still *a remnant according to the election of grace*, many of whom have been brought to the knowledge of the truth through the instrumentality of that excellent Society, "The Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews:" a Society which I would commend to the notice of you all. The vail has been removed from the eyes of many Jews. But that which has been one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the Jew—that which has hindered the conversion of many, has been the very erroneous interpretation adopted by our brethren; that which condemns the Jew for overlooking Messiah in humiliation, and which denies to the Jew the right of expecting Messiah personally in glory. There certainly is a want of consistency in this which we do not see in the interpretation of any other book. A want of consistency, the more to be lamented, inasmuch as, humanly speaking, it keeps many a poor Jew enchained by his sinful denial of the Lord of glory.

If, however, I have reason for proceeding one

more step, and affirming that a personal advent is a *certain* event, I need not detain you with arguments upon the mere probability of the question. I do not hesitate to declare my conviction that the advent will be *personal*. I am assured that it will be so, for these reasons:—

1. From the direct assertion of God's Word.
2. From the circumstances described in Scripture as connected with that event.

For the first point, the direct assertion of Scripture, let me refer you to Acts i., the chapter from whence the text is taken. The apostles (see verse 6) asked their Lord and Master, just on the point of leaving them, that he might prepare a place for them, *When he would restore again the kingdom to Israel*. Our Lord does not deny that a period will come when this great restoration shall take place; he contents himself with answering the question which was put to him, *That it was not for them to know the times or the seasons, which the Father had put in his own power. After he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight*. We may readily understand the anxiety which would have been felt by the apostles as they witnessed their beloved Master gradually receding from their view. Long were they disposed to loiter upon the spot. Stedfastly did they look up

to heaven; and then it was that angels thus addressed them, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in LIKE MANNER as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Can anything be stronger? Mark that which the apostles were doing. They had seen Jesus in the body: in that body the hands and side of which doubting Thomas had touched; in that body which after the resurrection had partaken of food. (Luke xxiv. 42.) In the body, I repeat, the apostles had seen Jesus ascend from earth toward heaven. They watched him until a cloud received him out of their sight. Observe, then, that in the verse I have quoted from Acts i. it is stated, that “so” in “like manner” Jesus should return. What can that mean, but that he shall return *personally*, with a body visible and tangible, and in a cloud? Compare with this Dan. vii. 13, 14, *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and you will see that*

this return in the clouds was foreknown and foretold by God. Look, again, at Matt. xxiv. 30, *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* What is the sign of the Son of man but the cloud of glory? Turn, again, to Matt. xxvi. 64, and you find our Lord's own words, *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven ; and we may confirm this by Rev. i. 7, Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.* The prophet Zechariah also leads us to the same conclusion ; xiv. 4, 5, *And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley ; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains ; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal : yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah :*

and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. Now I must candidly confess that it does seem to me imposible to feel any reverence for the Word of God, and then to read such a description as this, abounding as it does in such minute geographical details, and then to deny that the Lord will come again personally in the clouds of heaven, and that his feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives.

2dly. I maintain that the second advent will be a personal appearance from the circumstances described in Scripture, as connected with that event. I shall only speak very briefly upon this head, inasmuch as the seventh and eighth lectures will necessarily allude to it, and the eleventh must dwell upon it. I only, therefore, would draw your attention once more to that remarkable chapter, Zech. xiv. 9, *And the Lord shall be king over all the earth : in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one ;* also to Jer. xxiii. 5, 6, *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely ; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ;* with which we may also compare Zech. vi. 12, 13, *And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh*

the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man, whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. I might refer you to numerous other passages in the Old Testament; especially I might read a text already quoted, Dan. vii. 13, 14; but I will ask you to turn to Luke i. 32, 33, *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end;* and Acts ii. 30, *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*

How was the word "*throne*" understood by the Jews? What meaning would it convey to them? Surely the seat of power and authority;—and that *must* be the meaning in which we also are to receive that text.

I must not suffer myself to enter into a lengthened proof that the throne literally means the seat of power. I only therefore remark in passing, that Jesus did not, at his first advent, sit on the throne,

for he was despised, and rejected of men. He did not sit on that throne, for though Pilate prophetically wrote a title, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, yet so far was he, who was born a King, from being acknowledged as King, that he had not where to lay his head; and the Jews themselves declared, *We have no King but Cæsar*. And, again, when Pilate asked the multitude if he should crucify their King? they replied, *We will not have this man to reign over us*.

Still, however, objections may be raised to these statements. These shall be noticed, though my object has been to declare that which I believe to be the correct exposition of truth, more than to answer the objections which may be raised. Some may consider, from the language of Zech. ix. 9, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*, compared with John xii. 15, *Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt*, that the prophecy of Christ being a King upon earth has been fulfilled. But surely there is a wide difference between having the title and having the power. The time was not yet come in the eternal purpose of God for Jesus to be acknowledged King of kings, and for all the

kingdoms of this world *to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.*

Again, some may suppose that because our Lord has declared his kingdom is not of this world, that therefore he cannot be a King upon earth. Our Lord, however, never declared that his kingdom was not to be *in* this world, but merely that his kingdom neither took its rise from men, nor depended upon men. This is well illustrated by the second Psalm.

My Christian friends, I am fearful of detaining you to a very late hour, if I do not at once proceed to notice the third head of my subject, namely, *the scriptural prominence of this doctrine.* I think I ought, perhaps, to have maintained before you that this advent will be pre-millennial, but I expect that my Reverend brother, who will deliver the third lecture, will make this plain to you. I leave it therefore to him, and proceed to remark, that any doctrine which concerns our adorable Redeemer may be expected to occupy a prominent position in Holy Scripture.

To what degree any of my hearers may think it necessary that a doctrine should be made prominent before they are prepared to receive it, I cannot venture to say. I confess, that if I find a truth asserted plainly but once in Scripture, I feel myself bound to acknowledge it, and act upon it,

but the doctrine before us is constantly referred to in the sacred volume as *the* great means of awakening, warning, encouraging, comforting sinners. The great object, if I may so speak, of the Omnipotent, is to encourage the sinner to turn from the error of his way, and to seek the one living and true God in Christ. In death there is no one thing which is calculated to cheer, there is nothing which is not awful and terrifying, it is a fearful thing *to fall into the hands of the living God* ; but, on the other hand, in the views of sinless purity, in the notion of life, life with Christ, there is everything which we need to show us the vanity of things earthly, and the value of those joys which are God's right hand for evermore. It is thus St. John reasons ; 1 John iii. 2, *Beloved, he says, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*

Do we wish, then, for the language of our Lord, when he would have his people watchful, we have the parable of the ten virgins, Matt. xxv., in which we are told, *Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.* Compare with this 2 Peter iii. 8—11, *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years*

as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Would an apostle urge moderation upon his hearers, he says, Phil. iv. 5, Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Does the apostle desire to see affections spiritualized, he says, Col. iii. 2, 4, 5, Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. Does he desire to reform the immoral, he tells us, Titus ii., The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Does he urge repentance. It is (Acts iii. 19—21), Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Would he cheer the persecuted, he says, James v. 7, 8, Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord; be ye patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Would he encourage the Christian warrior, he says, 2 Tim. iv. 7, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Would he comfort those that sorrow for the loss of friends, he says, 1 Thess. iv. 13—18, But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with

the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Would the Apostle Jude give a general word of warning, he says, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

My brethren, I quote no more. Whatever blame may be attached to myself or to my brethren in the ministry for enforcing the duty of serving God on other grounds than those which the Scripture has laid down, *this*, at any rate, must be clear, the apostle considered the second advent of the Lord worthy of the greatest prominence in his ministry; and if this be clear, I am free to confess, that I am ignorant how any one can venture to neglect this important subject. It does appear to me to be great presumption to omit a topic so scriptural, and still more presumptuous to maintain that any other topic is better calculated to warn the sinner to walk closely with his God. When I reflect that

there are special blessings promised to those who look for his coming, and special warnings to those who say, *My Lord delayeth his coming*, I cannot but feel that it is my duty prominently to set forward the doctrine of the Second Advent. I will not keep you longer; I will only entreat you prayerfully to reflect upon the subject-matter of this address, the Certainty, Nature, and Scriptural prominence of the Second Advent. And may all who hear me this night be so taught by the Spirit of God, as from this very hour to watch for the return of their Lord!

LECTURE II.

THE ACTUAL NEGLECT OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

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MATT. XXV. 5.

*“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered
and slept.”*

THE parable from which these words are taken forms part of the same discourse of our Lord as is related in the preceding chapter. “As he sat upon the Mount of Olives,” we read, “the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the signs of thy coming, and of the end of the world.” And in answer to these questions, he gave a very concise account of the events which would take place after his departure from them, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the subse-

quent tribulation of the Jewish people, and concluding with "the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He then proceeded to give warnings and directions to his Church with respect to that deeply important event; first, in plain injunctions to be ready, and then in the parables which follow, enforcing those injunctions.

Now that parable, which is more immediately the subject for our consideration this evening, presents this event—the second advent of our Lord—in a most striking and attractive point of view. He comes as a Bridegroom to his Church. Does not this very term bring before our minds the infinite love and tenderness of our Lord?—As the Bridegroom of his Church "He loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Does it not remind us of his own gracious character, as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?" Does it not call our attention at once to that beautiful description which the inspired Psalmist gives us in the Forty-fifth Psalm, of the marriage of Him whom he addresses as that "God whose throne is for ever

and ever, and the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre?" Does it not lead us to the anticipation of that day, described in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelations, where St. John declares, "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his Bride hath made herself ready." If in the preceding chapter he uses the language of warning, he here addresses every one, who is taught to know him in his true character, in language most affecting to the heart, most winning to the affections. If John the Baptist could speak of himself as "rejoicing greatly because of the bridegroom's voice," if he could say,—when he had seen him coming out of the water of baptism, when the "Holy Spirit as a dove descended upon him," and the Father proclaimed him as "his beloved Son,"—"this my joy therefore is fulfilled;" if, as our Lord declares, the presence of the bridegroom so cheered the hearts of the "children of the bride-chamber," when he was with them in the days of his humiliation, that there was no place

amongst them for fasting and sorrow, oh ! what shall be the happiness of that day when we shall “see the King in his beauty ;” when we shall be “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb ;” when his “saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.” And, brethren, the parable from which my text is taken represents the Church as professing to look for such a day, as called out of the world for the very purpose of welcoming and glorifying Him at his coming.

But blessed as the object of this calling is, we have brought before us a truly humbling picture, from whence I purpose to illustrate the subject assigned to me in this course of Lectures, viz., “the actual Neglect of the Second Advent.”

“Whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” We will consider from these words—

First, the absence of our Lord ;

Secondly, the effects of that absence on the Church at large.

May God be pleased of his infinite mercy largely to bless the consideration of these points to our souls’ profit, for Jesus Christ’s sake !

First, then, we will consider the absence of the Lord ;—“the bridegroom tarried.” Such an absence, even a lengthened absence, is clearly fore-

told in Scripture. Our Saviour himself declares this very decidedly in that parable which follows the one we are now considering, in which he represents himself as a "man travelling into a far country," and thus speaks of his return (ver. 19), "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." A considerable period then, we are told, was to elapse between Christ's ascension into heaven, and "his coming in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven." Events of great importance, in their very character needing some time for their ripening, were foretold by St. Paul as being still to occur, when he wrote, in 2 Thess. ii. 1, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand;" [or, as is signified by the original word, *ενεσθηκεν*, will take place instantly.] "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was

yet with you, I told you these things? and now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." The Church is warned, indeed, against ever saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming." His people are commanded to have their "loins girded, and their lights burning, and to be themselves like unto men that wait for the Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately;" so that at no season of the Church's existence in her present state is this motive of hope and comfort and joy to be wanting. And though, at different periods, the expectation of the immediate or speedy coming of the bridegroom has been from time to time disappointed, and the people of the Lord have yet to wait, this is not to be used as an argument against their still expecting him, or to be regarded as proving that the expectation of his speedy approach must certainly now be an unfounded one. This is implied by our Lord's adding to the command to watch, the warning, Luke xii. 38, "If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch" (it is purposely not said, he shall not come in the second watch, or, because he has not come in the third watch, he will not come in the fourth); but "*if* he shall come in the second, or

come in the third, and find them so," "blessed are those servants." The direction given to the people of God is like that before given to the Prophet Habakkuk,—“The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

Such, then, is the present state of the Church. Though present, spiritually, with his people “always, unto the end of the world,” personally, the Lord is absent from his Church. He is at the “right hand of his Father;” “gone to receive a kingdom;” “waiting till his foes be made his footstool;” “tarrying,” but “to come.”

Let us proceed to consider—

II. The effect of this absence on the Church at large, as stated in my text.

“Whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” The professing people of God are represented in the parable under the figure of ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. There is an essential difference between these virgins: they are divided into two classes, the wise and the foolish. The wise are described as having oil in their vessels, “the foolish took no oil with their lamps.” In general terms we may say, that the oil in the vessels may signify the

unction of the Holy One, the blessed Spirit shining upon God's truth, enlightening, quickening, and preparing them to glorify him: the being destitute of this is the having a name to live whilst they are dead; to pass with the world as professors of religion, but to be strangers to the power of godliness. But, in one respect, we notice that both classes are alike. "Whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all *slumbered* and slept." The expression is remarkable, as seeming to imply a neglect of this truth *gradually creeping* over the Church, until at last it ended in a deep sleep. And the history of the Church answers well to this representation. At first, as in the apostles' time, there appears to have been no question as to the glorious appearing of the Lord being the one great object of expectation. The immediate effect upon the Thessalonians, on their conversion to God from idols, was not only "that they served the living and true God," but that "they waited for his Son from heaven;" and, indeed, the eagerness of their immediate expectation was so great, that St. Paul found it necessary to repress it by declaring the events which must previously occur. The primitive writers of the first three centuries almost universally maintain the view of the personal premillennial coming of Christ; and it was not till after the Roman empire became Christian, that the

slumber which had begun to pervade the Church terminated in a deep sleep. This, then, describes the general and actual neglect of the subject by the whole body of the Church at large: there may have been times, indeed, when there has been a starting from this slumber; there have been, doubtless, at different periods, individual members who have been more alive to the great truths connected with the subject; but such as was foretold has been the actual state of the Church in general with regard to it.

We will proceed to illustrate this, by remarking what have been the symptoms of this neglect.

Now it would be manifestly unfair and incorrect to confound the two classes represented as wise and foolish virgins, in considering the symptoms of neglect of this doctrine, which have been manifested by both. Their characters are essentially different, and the difference appears in this, as in other points. In the foolish virgins, the state of slumber is evidenced by the deep worldliness which appears to engross them, and to pervade their whole conduct. Notwithstanding their profession, is not the spirit of the world manifestly destroying all Christian principle and endangering their souls? How many are "living in pleasure," and are "dead whilst they live!" How many are heaping up for themselves treasures, ignorant that they are

heaping them up for the last days, and that they are nourishing their hearts as for "a day of slaughter!" How many are eagerly pursuing wealth for themselves and their families, "calling their lands after their own names," as though the fashion of the world were to abide for ever! And what are these but sad proofs of an indifference and unconcern as to the great object for which they are called to a Christian profession, to look for the coming of Christ as their King, and for a portion in his kingdom, and the consequence is, that whilst thus sleeping, Satan is busy sowing his tares amongst them, employing their minds and amusing their imaginations with matters of outward forms and ceremony, or corrupting them from the "simplicity which is in Christ," to follow foolish and vain questions, which would appear vain indeed, were they persuaded that the "Judge standeth at the door," that the "Lord cometh who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." We are warned that such an absence of anything like scriptural hopes, and such a want of real anxiety about spiritual interests, are decided marks of a state of slumber, such as is described in those awful words, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were

eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

But if such are the symptoms of the slumbering state of the mere professing Church as to this subject, there are other proofs that the wise virgins are and have been sleeping also.

We notice one of these symptoms in the fact, that holy, spiritually-minded men of God have ceased to set forth Christ's coming as prominently as Scripture does, as the blessed glorious hope of the Church of God. Instead of this, almost universally they have been accustomed to dwell only on the happiness of the separate state of the soul when absent from the body. They have discoursed largely upon death, and the blessedness of dying in the Lord. We are far from saying that they have in their teaching altogether overlooked a resurrection of the body; but the one subject has been treated most disproportionately with respect to the other. The perfecting of the body of Christ, by the gathering in of the whole number of the elect of God, with a view to his coming, to be glorified in them, has been lost sight of in the more selfish contemplation of our own individual safety in heaven; whilst the Church's hope of her Redeemer's reign has been merged in

the general view of the final judgment, which has been set forth as the great and sole event to be consummated at the second advent. Death has been considered as the same thing as the coming of the Lord. But if the Scriptures were consulted on this subject, how evident would appear the fact that this is really a proof that men have been slumbering as to this important doctrine. How different a place does the Word of God give to the *death* of the believer, in comparison with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! How little is said of the separate state of happiness, in comparison with that which is constantly recurring concerning the glory of the second advent! How is death always spoken of, as an enemy to be encountered—the coming of Christ, as an object to be loved, longed for, ardently desired. How differently does Peter speak of his “putting off the body of the flesh,” or Paul of his being “ready to be offered,” from the manner in which the one speaks of the “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,” and the other of his earnest eagerness “if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Nay, there is one argument which indisputably proves that death and the second advent are not, according to Scripture, to be regarded in the same light. No Christian man would think it right to pray for his own death,

whereas the Word of God contains the most earnest and eager prayers for the coming of the Lord. "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And if it be answered, that, as far as individual believers are concerned, the two ideas amount practically to the same thing, because the spiritual state of every man is fixed eternally at the moment of death, we reply, that it cannot be a matter of indifference to confound things which Scripture has distinguished; and that we ought to look for God's blessing most surely, (whether for the conversion of sinners, or for the edification of his own people,) when using the arguments employed by the Lord himself in his Word, "If any man speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God."

Now the neglect of which we have been speaking, may doubtless be traced principally to a mistaken view of the nature and objects of the present dispensation, which has encouraged the expectation of a universal spread of spiritual light and knowledge and love throughout the world before the coming of Christ; or, to erroneous opinions concerning the millennium; some having imagined that event to have already taken place, notwithstanding the direct proofs to the contrary, in the usurpation of the Antichristian system of Popery, and in the manifest dominion of Satan in the hearts of the

children of disobedience. Others suppose that there will be a gradual, or even it may be a more manifestly miraculous diffusion of the Gospel, bringing about a spiritual millennium before the day of judgment. But we may notice that there is not one word said of such a glorious and interesting event in the whole of that one discourse of our Lord, of which the parable of the ten virgins forms a part, beginning at the fourth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter, in which our Lord answers the question of the apostles, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the signs of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Were it not strange, indeed, when speaking of the signs which should precede his coming, if this spread of true religion were to be one of them, to omit that, which beyond all others, could be most easily observed by us? Nor in the Epistles do we find any expectation of the kind held out. Nay, when St. Paul speaks to the Thessalonians of the falling away first, and of the revelation of the Man of Sin—he does not speak of the recovery of the truth, or of its universal diffusion, before the coming of Christ, but tells us rather that the Lord shall "consume that wicked one by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming:" and we are warned in many passages that the coming of Christ will overtake the

Church, not after a preparation for it by a previous millennium, but "as a thief in the night."

Another cause of this neglect has been a prejudice against the study of the prophetic writings; as though any part of God's Word could be safely laid aside by his Church. Whereas, with regard to the book in which are written the things most "difficult to be understood," we find an especial blessing attached to the study of it; "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that know the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." We are bound indeed to acknowledge that this objection has been strengthened by some of the errors and extravagances of those who have professed to hold this truth; but, brethren, we would urge on you the consideration, that this objection would apply to almost all the truths contained in Scripture—for which one of them has not been held in unrighteousness? and those which most justly afford the highest spiritual enjoyment to the believer have been constantly perverted, as though Satan, knowing their worth and excellence, would put a hindrance in the way of their being received. We are not, therefore bidden in the Scriptures to be afraid of examining into such truths, but rather, the Divine Word says, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

Such seem to have been the causes of this neglect. I can only hastily glance at some of the sad consequences to the world in general.

1st, There is no doubt that a great stumbling-block has been thrown in the way of the Jews. They have always been expecting a glorious King as their Saviour: they have always been looking for the recovery of their land, and for the restoration of their ancient privileges. Surely, the prophecies contained in God's Word have given them the greatest reason to do so. Their sin has been, that they have overlooked those which spoke of his first coming in humiliation. Is it to be wondered at, then, that when they have seen a large body of men calling themselves the Church of Christ corrupted by Popery and Infidelity, and others who hold the pure faith, withholding the promises from the Jews, and explaining away, by a figurative interpretation, large portions of the Scriptures, they have been encouraged in their rejection of the Son of David, who, having come first of all in humiliation, shall come again to reign over the house of Israel for ever? We see, indeed, what cause the apostle had for that caution to the Gentile Church, "Be not high-minded, but fear."

2. Another grievous consequence of this neglect has been the encouragement unintentionally given to Infidelity. If we look at the plans devised by

the enemy for the bringing about a kind of intellectual and moral millennium, apart from the Word of Christ and his glory, is it not evident that the Church would have most strongly protested against such an idea, had she held up the glory of Messiah's second coming and Messiah's reign as alone accomplishing those hopes which are kindled even in many who cannot but feel and acknowledge the unsatisfactoriness of our present state?

3. And once more I would notice, as a consequence of this neglect, the discouragement of Christian missions not only to the Jews but to the Heathen. I know that the opposite view to this has been taken by many zealous advocates of the missionary cause, who have feared lest the expectation of the speedy coming of Christ, and the view of his personal reign, should damp missionary zeal. But such an opinion is altogether, I conceive, founded on a misconception of the subject; for surely, brethren, did we realize the blessings of the approaching kingdom of Christ, who ought to be so zealous for the preaching of the Gospel, as those who are looking for and expecting that coming? Our Lord tells us, that it is not until "the Gospel of the kingdom" shall have been "preached in all the world" "for a witness unto all nations," that "the end shall come." Our Church teaches us to pray that the Lord would "shortly accomplish the number of his elect,

and hasten his kingdom." Will not a believer, to whom (after he has realized the great truths on which his own salvation rests) the speedy coming of his Lord has become the chief object of earnest expectation, will not such a one be animated with a most eager desire to be an instrument, in the Lord's hand, for the fulfilment of those events which are yet to be accomplished? What a stirring echo to the longing of his own heart, is the cry of the "whole creation," through sin and the miserable prevalence of Heathenism, "groaning and travailing with pain together until now!" What a motive for fervour and zeal in the missionary cause has he who can look at every soul converted to God as a fresh earnest of the near approach of the "day of redemption!" When he thinks of the hopes set before him in connexion with the bridegroom's return, how will he long that many should "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God!" What a motive, too, arises from a sense of the importance of the present time, and the graciousness of the Lord's still tarrying, a tarrying in which we ourselves, with thousands of others, are interested; for had he come ere this, we should have been deprived of a share in those unspeakable enjoyments which

await the children of the bridechamber when "he shall appear" "to take his kingdom," and "to reign before his ancients gloriously;" and when that promise shall be fulfilled, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

Brethren, you, who in this waiting season are looking for the Lord's appearing, let your zeal in the missionary cause repel this unfounded charge of coldness, let your earnest co-operation in every effort for the in-gathering of souls be a sufficient answer to such an accusation, when urged as an argument against the study of the subject, or against the adoption of such a view of his kingdom.

Lastly, does it not become the faithful ministers of God's Word to call upon the Church to throw off this neglect, to rouse herself, to put on her beautiful garments, and to expect the coming of the Lord? How know we, brethren, that the cry is not now at once to be made—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh?" "At midnight," we are told, "was the cry made." This is the term by which the Lord characterizes the times of mingled disquietude and peace, of slumber and of busy worldliness, that shall precede his coming. Is there nothing in the aspect of the present times which corresponds to this description? On all

sides we hear of external peace; inasmuch as there has been a long interval of comparative peace throughout the world; on all sides schemes of worldly policy and gain are eagerly pursued; and while men will admit that there are whispered fears of danger, many will repeat, one to another, that all will yet be well. Others, while their hearts are secretly filled with boding expectations of events that are coming on the earth, are ready to scorn those who would refer them to God's Word for guidance. But that is no true peace which is not based upon God's Word. It is "when men shall say, Peace and safety," we are told, "that sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape." We see in the lowering clouds of Popery and superstition the threatenings of a stormy midnight. We hear in the sullen whisperings of Infidelity and lawlessness the presage of coming judgments. Is there not much to make us think that it is now our part to lift up our voice as a trumpet to proclaim the fact—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Oh, that that cry might be heard, might be heeded! "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

The only light which can enlighten you in a season of darkness and dismay, is the light of Divine truth; not a mere speculative notion, but that which rests on the Word of God, taken in its

plain, literal, unadulterated sense. Oh ! are we addressing any who are living in sin and worldliness, with their hearts unconverted to God,—any who may be just roused to a sense of their real condition, whose minds may well be filled with terror and dismay at the thoughts of Christ's coming to find them in their present state,—any to whom the horrors of an awakened conscience seem, like the midnight gloom, to be closing round them,—unwise virgins, having no oil in their lamps,—we would urge you to “go and buy the truth, and sell it not !” We would send you at once to the Word of God, which testifies of Jesus, who is to be sought now as a Saviour, that you may be prepared to meet him as the bridegroom. May the light of the Word direct you to him ! May it be given to you so to believe that you may not be ashamed at his coming ; “for whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed !”

To the true spiritual members of the Church, we would say ; At least study this subject, search the Scriptures with especial regard to it. It must be allowed to be a subject of deepest interest : it claims then, surely, that you should carefully and prayerfully inquire into it. Is it not presumptuous to persist in refusing to look into any part of God's Word ? It has been well said, that “no mistakes of honest inquirers into prophetic truth

are so fatal as the error of neglecting and despising the spirit of prophecy, which is the ‘testimony of Jesus.’” (Rev. xix. 10.)

The word of prophecy especially, remember, is spoken of as “a light shining in a dark place, whereunto we do well that we take heed.” It was not intended, as has been well said of experience, to be “like the lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves which are past;” but we are invited to bring it forward, that it may cheer the Church on her stormy passage through the night of this world, while she is waiting for the rising of the “Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings;” much in the same manner as St. Luke, in Acts xxvii., describes the shipwrecked sailors with St. Paul “wishing for the day.”

But, again, study it with a remembrance of the opposition of your own hearts to the truth of God; to whatever is not an object of sight and sense; to whatever is not to be arrived at by human probabilities. This is a question which rests altogether on scriptural evidence. “What says the Lord?” But then the subjects connected with it are so sublime, so far beyond what the imagination can picture to itself,—the coming of the Son of man in clouds of heaven,—the resurrection of the just,—the saints caught up to meet the Lord in the air,—his reign of righteousness,—all

so far beyond what it hath entered into "the heart of man to conceive," that we have cause to pray that we may have faith *just* to receive what Scripture says, and not to be stumbled by it.

Study it, above all, with prayer for the Holy Spirit, remembering, that though your judgment should be ever so strongly convinced on the subject, or it should be made ever so plain to your understanding, or even if all knowledge were given to you to know all mysteries, that alone would profit you nothing. This, like every other scriptural truth, in order that it may be profitable to us, needs to be "spiritually discerned" with all its practical bearing on the will, the desires, the affections, the conduct. The means by which the lamp may be made to burn brightly is by the pouring in of the oil, the replenishing of the "unction of the Holy One, by whom we know all things," who can by his grace give sobriety of judgment while he imparts simplicity of faith; and thus guard us, on the one hand, from extravagant interpretations which bring dishonour on those truths which we hold, and keep us, on the other, from that leaning on men's judgments and human systems, which may prevent our receiving a part of that which God has revealed for the edification and blessing of his people.

I would just, in conclusion, remind you, my brethren, who hold this truth in what I conceive

to be the real scriptural view of it, that you have the greatest cause for watchfulness. The eyes of the world are upon you, the eyes of those who are suspicious of the tendency of such opinions are upon you. Show, through the grace of God, that you are equally zealous for *all* God's truth; that while you are looking for the glorious appearing of your Lord, your hope of being admitted to have a share in that glory rests on the great doctrines of Justification by faith alone in him, and Sanctification by his Spirit. "Christ is in you the hope of glory," because you know him as the "Lord your Righteousness." Desire to hold all the truth of God in due proportion, and above all, pray, and, in dependence on God's grace, strive to have ever before you the argument of St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 11 to 14): "Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

LECTURE III.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THE TIME OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM PYM, M.A.,
VICAR OF WILLIAN, HERTS.

1 THESS. V. 1—6.

“ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

THE subject, which has been selected for our meditation this evening, is *The Doctrine of the New Testament on the Time of the Second Advent*. And if there be one, which stands prominently forward in the book of God, as more important than its fellows, and which is therefore deserving of our best attention, it is that of *the second coming of the Lord*. That the Church of Christ has long failed to give to it the attention which it deserves, none, I think, can deny; for if it be not permitted to occupy the same position in our divinity, which it confessedly occupies in that of the writers of the Old and New Testament, we then fail to follow them as they followed Christ.

The passage which I have selected from St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians, refers clearly to the subject, and may well form the groundwork of our present meditations. I propose, therefore, to view it after the following manner, and would endeavour to show:

I. *That God has set times, or seasons, for all his works.*

II. *That he has revealed to his Church the times of those operations, in which she has been chiefly interested, before their arrival;*

And I would then inquire: .

III. *Whether the time of the second advent of the*

Lord is an exception to this rule, according to the doctrine of the New Testament.

Here let me remind you of our privilege on such occasions as the present, which is to look to the Holy Ghost as our teacher. May our hearts, therefore, be lifted up to him, who sitteth on the right hand of power, as the heart of one man, to ask of him this gracious gift, and having received that unction of the Holy One, may I speak "as the oracles of God," and may you receive the truth in the love of it, to the glory of God by us, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

I. Our first position is, *That God has set times, or seasons, for all his works.*

1. *The attributes of the Godhead, as the God, who governs the world, demand it.*

When we consider the condition in which God placed man upon this earth, and his early rebellion against him, we might have supposed, that the sin of our first parents would have so provoked him that he would have withdrawn from it his fatherly care, and excepted this one world from his wide-spread administration. But no: he still loved it, and watched over it, and upheld it, and ordered and overruled all things concerning it. Hence, three of the Divine attributes rendered it absolutely necessary that he should have had set

times, or seasons, for all his works in connexion with it. If it were not so, what would become of his *fore-knowledge*? Deprive the Divine character of this, and he ceases to be God. Again, his manifold *wisdom* requires it. If it be essential to him, as the God who governs the world, that he should have known all things concerning it from the beginning, as essential is it that he should have appointed all things by the rule of his infinite wisdom; and, therefore, set times for everything connected with it. And as we know that he is *the author not of confusion, but of order*, so we are driven to the like result, and must believe, for this reason also, that the thing is true. Indeed, the very fact, that sin had brought in disorder, and confusion, and every evil work, tends only the more effectually to exhibit the glory of God in this respect, and to convince us more powerfully of the existence of this feature in his character; inasmuch as he has triumphed thereby over all those evils, and is overruling and directing all to bring about his eternal purposes.

2. But *his mighty deeds proclaim it, whether we observe them in the ordinances of nature, or examine the appointments of his grace.*

Look to the instinctive actings of the fowl of the air. Jeremiah tells us, that "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the

turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming." (Jer. viii. 7.) Who hath implanted that sure guide within them? God. Look now to the seasons, as described in Noah's covenant, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. viii. 22.) And now lift up your heads and contemplate the starry heavens above them, and say who binds "the sweet influences of the Pleiades," or looses "the bands of Orion," who brings forth "Mazaroath in his season," or guides "Arcturus and his sons." (Job xxxviii. 31.) Have not I the Lord? "He appointeth the moon for certain seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down." (Psalm civ. 19.) "He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names." (Psalm cxlvii. 4.) In each of these cases, the same fact is declared, and of God it is proclaimed that he is a God not of confusion but of order, and has set times and seasons for all his operations.

The same doctrine is taught by *the ordinances of grace*.

When the first Adam sinned, what became of man's heritage? It was desolated, and fell into circumstances of dissolution. Had Jehovah failed to anticipate this state of things, or to provide a remedy for this emergency? Let the second

Adam reply. "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars of it." (Psalm lxxv. 3.) The heritage was laid waste, but God had provided Christ to restore the desolation. Hence, when the remedy had been revealed, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, what, according to man's judgment, would be the time for the manifestation of this remedy? We should have expected that it would speedily have appeared. But God's ways are not as our ways, and four thousand years and more must revolve before the great mystery of godliness should be exhibited, because then, and not till then, the fulness of time would have arrived according to Divine appointment. But, when that fulness of time did come, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4, 5.) The mind of Eve seems to afford an illustration of the doctrine which we have advanced. If the idea be correct, which some have entertained, that the words (Gen. iv. 1) translated, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," may mean "I have gotten the man Jehovah;" then her thought was, that her first-born child should stand in the breach which she had made between God and man, and be the peacemaker betwixt them. The event proved the unsoundness of her ex-

pectation ; and it is one mark of our fallen condition to entertain incorrect, and, therefore, unbecoming notions of God. It was so with them of old time, who, finding that they could not rise to his high standard, attempted to bring Him down to theirs, and thus measured him by the measures of a man. And we walk in their steps, and become partakers of their error, when thus we judge concerning him. Our God is not a God of expedients like man : surprised as it were by this event, and suddenly called upon to provide for that emergency. “ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning,” and from the unfathomable recesses of his own eternity, he has looked forth over all the future concerns of time, fore-ordaining everything according to his pre-determinate counsel ; and, consistently with that sure rule, shall each be unfolded in its season. Thus, I think, our first position is established, and we proceed to the next :

II. *That God has revealed to his Church the times of those operations, in which she has been chiefly interested, before their arrival.*

Here permit me to remind you of some few of the more prominent instances, recorded in the Scriptures, in order to prove our doctrine.

I first turn to the history of the old world in the days of Noah. What was the condition of the

Church at that time? It was brought very low: confined to one family; for "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," and "Noah alone walked with God." (Gen. vi. 9, 12.) The universal wickedness called for universal judgment. "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart," wherefore he came to this conclusion, that the end of all flesh was come, and that he would destroy them with the earth. But did the judgment come suddenly, without one note of warning to the Church, or to the world? He revealed his purpose to Noah, and granted a respite of one hundred and twenty years. (Gen. vi. 3.) Now Noah was "a preacher of righteousness;" by him, therefore, the world was warned, and during that season called to repentance. Here we find a confirmation of our doctrine. Here a specific period was revealed to the Church of the coming judgment, that Noah might prepare an ark for the saving of himself and house.

I turn next to the Egyptian bondage and deliverance. When the Lord covenanted with Abraham, we find that he revealed to him many particulars respecting his posterity. Thus, in Gen. xv. 13, 14, "He said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and

they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

Here, again, were circumstances in which the Church was deeply interested. Here was a time of suffering, and of deliverance, and how did God deal with her? He revealed both. And the revelation is made with such distinctness *as to time*, that when Moses is recording, under the influence of Divine inspiration, the accomplishment of the promised deliverance, he tells us that on "*the self-same day*" it was fulfilled. "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." (Exodus xii. 40—42.)

Let us look forward now, in the Church's history, to the seventy years' captivity and return. The long-suffering of Jehovah had been wearied out, and, by the mouth of Jeremiah, he foretold that judgment was at the door. But observe, how

in the midst of judgment he remembered mercy, and how accurately he defined the period of the endurance of the one, and of the return of the other. "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the mill-stones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." (Jer. xxv. 8—12.) Here was the revelation of a specific time. We find, accordingly, that Daniel was occupied with this very revelation of Jeremiah, in order to ascertain where he stood, *as to time*, in respect to the pro-

mised deliverance (Dan. ix. 2); and thus we also find another confirmation of the truth which is contained in our second head.

We will next attend to the first advent of Christ. This was a subject of lively interest to each branch of the ransomed Church of God, to things in heaven, as well as to things in earth; for the decease, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem, was the act upon which the standing of the spirits of just men, made perfect in heavenly places, was depending, as well as the hope of the militant branch here on earth. This was the event which many prophets and righteous men desired to see, but had not seen. What now, in *a way of time*, had God revealed concerning this? Daniel will inform us. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah

be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Dan. ix. 24—27.) Here, once more, we discover peculiar accuracy respecting this then coming event. Here we perceive, that God informed the Church so clearly when she was to expect Messiah's appearing, that when John the Baptist began his ministry, "the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not." (Luke iii. 15.)

But if the coming of the Lord in humiliation was thus explicitly declared long before, so was the overthrow of the Jewish polity in Church and State. Here we must go back to Jacob's prophecy, where we meet with the following striking passage: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. xlix. 10.) This is com-

monly referred to the time of the appearing of Jesus Christ in the flesh; but the difficulties attendant upon the correct application of this prophecy *to the time of that coming*, oblige me to adopt Joseph Mede's explanation of it, which I must acknowledge to be satisfactory.* Consider-

* "Some will have it to have been when Pompey first brought the Jewish State under the Roman subjection. But against this it is objected—First, that it anticipates the time of Christ's birth too much, being sixty years before it. Secondly, that it might as well be affirmed, that the sceptre departed from Judah when Nebuchadnezzar carried them captive to Babylon, or when they were subject to the Persian or Greek monarchies." "Others make it a little after: when Herod, an Idumæan stranger, yet formerly incorporated into the Jewish State and blood, was by the Romans invested to be their king, and the Asmonæan, or Maccabæan race (which till then had borne the chief rule) was by him extinguished. Against this, also, lies the exception, that it was too early, being thirty years or more before the birth of Christ, and more than twice as much before his passion and ascension, at which time he began his kingdom."—"If the sceptre were departed from Judah, because one, not of their *own tribe*, had the sovereign rule over them, why was it not departed all the time the Asmonæan, or Maccabæan families, who were Levites, reigned? No man would say, that the sceptre had departed from Poland, though the Polanders should choose a Swede, a German, or a Frenchman for their king. So neither from Judah, though a Levite or Idumæan proselyte were their prince." (From Mede's "Diatribes.") He then establishes what is advanced in the text.

ing our translation to be incorrect, he adopts the following: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, *and the gathering of the nations be to him :*" i. e., "until Messiah come, and the people or nations be gathered unto him, the sceptre shall not depart." Where, *two things were to take place, before Judah ceased from being a commonwealth ;* first, the coming of Shiloh into the world ; secondly, the gathering of the Gentiles to him. At the destruction of the Jewish state by Titus, both these things took place ; and we derive a confirmation of this view, from the recorded fulfilment, in Rom. x. 10, of our Lord's prophecy of Matt. xxiv. 14, "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come." To which St. Paul evidently refers, in the words which follow : "But I say, Have they not heard ? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Rom. x. 18.) In all which we find our position strengthened. Were it otherwise, where would be the long-suffering, the mercy, and the grace of God : those attributes which, form the chief attraction to sinners, in his condescending dealings with them ? When he declared his name to Moses, and made all his goodness pass before him, what

was the style in which, as his own herald, he proclaimed himself? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) He said nothing of his power, little of his justice, and nothing of his holiness. He had to deal with *sinners*. And if, when the *holiness* of God is displayed, man hides his face before him; if, when his *justice* is declared, man lays his hand upon his mouth; if, when his *power* utters its voice in thunders, the holiest of men may say, "I exceedingly fear and quake:" when the still small voice of *mercy* is heard, he begins to lift up his head; when his *grace* is proclaimed, he feels encouragement to draw near to him; when his *long-suffering* is unfolded, he comes, and with a holy boldness, to a throne of grace. Our God has not forgotten to be gracious in his dealings with his Church; for, "in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

III. *And is the time of the second advent an exception to this rule?*

This, need I say it, is the great event towards which the eye of faith has been turned from the very first. To this, as to a centre, every thought, and word, and work of every intelligent creature,

has been proceeding. Toward this the whole current of time has been flowing, and all the concerns of men shall be found to have brought in their tributary streams, when "in the dispensation of the fulness of the times God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." (Eph. i. 10.) And has God hung clouds and darkness around it? Has he shrouded it with a mystery which no wisdom can pierce? Has he placed cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turns every way, to prevent access to this tree of knowledge? God has done none of these things; it is man's unbelief that has thrown obscurity around it: it is man's unbelief that has hung the veil before it: it is man's unbelief that hinders our ready access to it. What, therefore, is to be done? Stretch forth the hand of faith, and rend that veil in twain, from the top even to the bottom, and be not faithless, but believing.

1. We will now endeavour to reconcile some *apparent* contradictions in the Scriptures concerning it; and then,

2. Show what is the New Testament doctrine upon the subject.

I here lay much stress upon the word *apparent*; for there can be no actual contradiction in Holy Writ. Can we, for one moment, suppose the Holy

Spirit to be divided against himself? It is impossible. Can we conceive, that the Divine testimony shall at one time say, Yea, at another, Nay? The supposition is inconceivable. The stream of Divine truth, which at the first issued from the throne of God, has run on from the beginning in one continuous course through time, and shall do so even to the end. There neither have been, nor ever can be, any opposing currents. It turns at no season "as the streams in the south." (Psalm cxxvi. 4.) There is a sweet and all-pervading concord throughout the whole of the Divine testimony in the Word; and if you touch but one string, every other shall vibrate, for there is a chord of harmony which passes through them all.

The Scriptures which I shall now adduce are two, as being among the most important of those to which I have referred, being those also which are most commonly brought forward as opposed to all expectation of knowledge respecting the time of the Lord's appearing. Matt. xxiv. 32—36, is the first. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away,

but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Here is an *apparent* contradiction. Our Lord had replied to the questions, proposed to him by his people, as recorded in the third verse. He then assures them, that when the things of which he had been speaking should come to pass, they (i.e., the generation who should witness those things) might as certainly know that he was near, even at the doors, as the inhabitants of Judæa knew that summer was nigh when the fig tree put forth its leaves. He then adds, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." We add to this, from St. Mark's Gospel, "neither the Son;" for at that time it had not been revealed to him. There appear to have been three periods in the history of our blessed Lord when he received the gift of the Spirit: at his conception: at his baptism, when he was inaugurated into the office of the high priesthood; and when he ascended up on high, having led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he shed forth that which those present then saw and heard. Then, doubtless, the human nature of the Lord had received the

fulness of *wisdom* as intimated in the ascription of praise to him by the Church above. (Rev. v. 12.) Most true it was, that when our Lord spake, the time of his coming was unknown, save to God only: but no less true must it be, that the generation who should witness that advent should be enabled to ascertain, by the signs with which he would furnish them, that he was nigh, even at their very doors, as did the Judæan that summer was nigh when the fig tree put forth its leaves. Now look to what immediately follows. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, *and knew not until the flood came*, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 37—39.) From this it is clear, that the ungodly world "*knew not*," because they believed not the testimony of that preacher of righteousness. *But Noah knew*. So it shall be in the corresponding season. They who believe not the testimony of "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," shall not know, because of unbelief. But *they who believe*, and, like Noah, are looking for the fulfilment of the word, and therefore, for Christ's appearing, *shall know*, or else the parallel fails.

Again, Acts i. 6, 7, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power," is another passage which is always pressed into this service. If our blessed Lord intended that the time, when he would restore the kingdom to Israel, should alway be hid, which is connected also with his return in glory, why did the Holy Ghost, in taking of the things of Christ and showing them to the Apostle Paul, teach him to write to the Thessalonians the words of our text? According to the *extent of the meaning*, which is given commonly to that passage of the Acts, what St. Paul has written cannot be true; and no Christian man will allow that. How, therefore, are they to be reconciled? We must look to the *later communication* of the Lord to the Church by the Spirit; and looking to that, we are constrained to own, that though previous to his ascension the time of his return in glory was not known, he made such further revelations respecting it to his people, that they need no longer be in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief, but should possess such knowledge of times and seasons as effectually to

prepare them for the coming of the Lord. I see not how it is possible, without involving the absolute denial of the truth of many parts of God's Word, to view this in any other light. Having thus shown, I trust, how these passages may be reconciled, I proceed to consider,

2. The New Testament doctrine upon the subject.

Here it will be very needful to distinguish clearly the scriptural use of three terms, which are employed to describe either *the whole time*, or *portions of the time* between the two advents.

An accurate observation of the words employed, with this reference, will teach us,

1st. That the whole period, between the first and second coming of the Lord, is called generally, *the last times*, or *days*.

Thus, Acts ii. 17, "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh," &c. Again, 2 Tim. iii. 1, St. Paul is describing what shall occur during that period, and he says, "This know also, that *in the last days* perilous times shall come," &c. Another instance of it is found, Heb. i. 1, 2, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath *in these last days* spoken unto us by

his Son." In each of which places we find the times of the Christian Church, or dispensation, described by the term, "*the last days*."

2d. The latter portion of these last times is set forth by the expression, "*the latter times*." Thus, when St. Paul, himself living in the last days or times, foretels an event which should hereafter take place in them, he marks the time of that event by the use of the expression, "*the latter times*." Thus, 1 Tim. iv. 1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that, *in the latter times*, some shall depart from the faith," &c.*

3d. When the actual winding up of these last times is described, it is by the term, "*the last day, or time*."

So St. Peter employs it, 1 Pet. i. 5, "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed *in the last time*." In St. John's Gospel the term is used by our Lord four times in one chapter, and on each occasion connected with the resurrection of the dead. John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54, "And this is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again, *at the last day*." Martha, the sister of Lazarus, employs the same, when looking to the same season. John xi. 24, "Martha saith

* See Note A.

unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection *at the last day*." And this is an expression distinct from that which St. John employs, 1 John ii. 18, where he says, "Little children, it is the last time (or *hour*);* and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The season, which he there described, as the last time or hour, was then at hand, and must therefore be different from that which is connected, in other passages, with the resurrection of the dead. It has accordingly been considered, by that eminent expositor Joseph Mede, that it referred to the dissolution of the Jewish polity, which was then at hand, wherefore the term so used by St. John correctly referred to that approaching judgment. It was then, strictly speaking, the last hour, for the dissolution of their polity in Church and State was then nigh, even at the door.

With these distinctive terms in our minds, I proceed to show, that *God has revealed notable events, which are to succeed each other, as links in a chain, during these last times*, and to these it will be well now to turn, as from them we may gather

* The word employed by St. John in this place is *ώρα*, not *ἡμερα*, which last is the word used in the other passages.

the time of the second coming of the Lord. I cannot here refrain from quoting a valuable rule of the same distinguished man, of whom I have just spoken, which belongs to this part of our subject. "The times are set out unto us to be as marks to inform us, *when that should come to pass*, which was to fall out in them, and not the things which were to befall, intended for signs to know the times by." (Apost., p. 67.) I consider this rule valuable for the following reason, because, whilst the latter part only is usually considered, the former is almost, if not altogether, forgotten. Now it is our privilege to employ both: for I think our Saviour's words qualify the last clause of it. We should do the one, and not leave the other undone. And this I propose doing on the present occasion. What, now, are those notable events which form the successive links in the prophetic chain, of which we have been speaking?

1. The preaching of the Gospel in the prophetic earth. Matt. xxiv. 14; Rom. x. 18.
2. Jerusalem's overthrow. Matt. xxiv. 2.
3. The Pagan persecutions. Dan. xi. 32, 33; Rev. ii. 10; xii. 4.
4. Pagan Rome Christianized. Rev. vi. 2.
5. The decline and fall of Rome, or fourth kingdom. Dan. ii. 41; vii. 24; Rev. xvii. 10.
6. The rise of the ten kingdoms. Dan. vii. 7, 24.

7. The rise of Papal Rome with her triple crown.
Dan. vii. 8, 24.
8. The rise of the Eastern Antichrist. Dan. viii.
23; Rev. vi. 8.
9. The 1260 years of Papal oppression of the
saints. Dan. vii. 21; Rev. xii. 6, 14.
10. The consumption of the Papacy by the breath
of the Lord's mouth. 2 Thess. ii. 8.
11. The heaving of the great earthquake, by which
the powers of Christendom should be shaken.
Rev. vi. 12.
12. The wasting away of the Eastern Antichrist.
Rev. xvi. 12.
13. The going forth of the three unclean spirits.
Rev. xvi. 13.
14. The preaching of the Gospel to every nation,
and kindred, and tongue, and people. Rev.
xiv. 6.*
15. The pity of the Lord's servants for Zion.
Psalm cii. 13, 14.
16. The sign of the Son of man in heaven. Matt.
xxiv. 30.
17. The first resurrection, and rapture of the saints.

* Observe how different are the terms employed in this prediction of the preaching of the Gospel before the Lord come, and that foretold by him, Matt. xxiv. 14, which was fulfilled before the judgment upon the Jews there predicted : this latter being more extensive than the former.

Rev. xx. 4—6; 1 Thess. iv. 15—17; 1 Cor. xv. 23.

18. The coming of Elijah the Prophet. Mal. iv. 5.

19. The judgments upon the ungodly world. Isa. xxxiv. 1—8; lxvi. 15, 16; Dan. xii. 1; Matt. xxiv. 21; Rev. xvi. 18, 20, 21.

20. The Lord's descent upon this earth. Acts i. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 16; Rev. i. 7.

21. The restoration of Abraham's seed. Jer. xxiii. 3—8; xxxi. 7—12; Ezek. xxxvii.; Dan. xii. 1, 7, &c.

22. The thousand years' reign of righteousness and peace. Isa. xxiv. 23; Rev. xx. 4, 6.

In this we see a regular series of events, found in the book of God, as those which were to occur *during the last times*, with some of which specific numbers* are associated: with others, some notes of warning are connected: which, when they are heard, inform us certainly of their presence, and consequently of our arrival at such given periods in the last times.

From the above review, several important conclusions may be drawn. And, first, as it respects *the question, we have proposed, respecting the second advent.*

God has not forgotten to be gracious in this case, nor acted contrary to his accustomed rule of

* Note B.

mercy, of giving warning to his Church of the great coming events, in which she is concerned. He has warned her of her Lord's approach. He has given her a prophetic statement of many which should surely succeed each other in their appointed season, some of which were "*shortly to come to pass*,"* after the vision had been communicated by Jesus Christ, to his servant John, and should so continue, in due succession, until the whole should be wound up, or concluded, by the coming of the Lord in glory.

Another, and in connexion with our present subject, a most important inference, must be, *that the next appearing of the Lord shall be pre-millennial*.

Examine the course of predicted events, and what do we find? The condition of this world, continuing as it has been since the first entry of sin into it, groaning and travailing in pain. No cessation from this state, no rest, no peace. The wicked never ceasing from troubling, the proud still called happy, death still holding men in fear and bondage, and sorrow and sighing still forming

* This assurance, with which the book of the Revelation opens, chap. i. 1, is repeated at its close, chap. xxii. 6, showing clearly, that the fulfilment of the larger part of those predictions was not to be postponed until the end of the times of the Gentiles.

a part of man's inheritance from his fathers. And how and when is this sad state to be concluded, and what shall succeed it? It can be concluded only by the appearing of the Lord, *because, when he comes, he will find our miserable world in this sin and sorrow bound condition*; because from this he is the deliverer; because, by the brightness of his Epiphany, he shall put a stop to these things; because, until he come, Satan's usurped, but permitted dominion, shall continue, and while that remaineth, no millenary blessedness can succeed; because, until he come, the tares and the wheat are intermingled, intermixed also the sheep with the goats; because, until he come, Judah shall not be saved, nor shall Israel dwell safely: and until that be brought about there can be no "life from the dead," no millenary blessedness for our world, no keeping of a Sabbath for man. But, when he appears, sorrow and sighing shall flee away; when he appears, he will renew the face of the earth which he has made for man; when he appears, he brings all his saints with him to fulfil their long-cherished expectation of reigning with him on the earth: then he will restore the kingdom to Israel: then the meek-spirited shall possess the earth, and be refreshed in the multitude of peace. For a reason composed of all these reasons *the time of the second advent of the Lord must be*

premillennial. And this receives confirmation from our Lord's most plain testimony to the state in which he will find the earth, when he comes. It is to be as it was both in Noah's and Lot's day. If, therefore, the earth was then in a condition of millennial blessedness, so it will be when the Lord shall come; but if, as all must confess, it was in each of those cases in a condition of open rebellion against God, then the inference is clear, that the Lord must come to subdue this rebellious state, and having done this, *then* to introduce the millennial blessedness.

But another important effect of considering the course of events, which are foretold as to occur during the last times, is this: *that we can place our finger upon the very point at which we have arrived in the prophetic history.* We can look through the whole course, and divide the fulfilled from the unfulfilled, the accomplished from what yet remains to be. And when we do so in the present case, and look back upon the foregoing catalogue, where does the mind necessarily rest, saying, thus far we have reached? We fix naturally, and almost by a common consent, upon *the preaching of the Gospel in all the earth; and the exhibition of pity, on the part of the Lord's servants, for Zion, and her desolate condition.* But if we do this, what is the necessary conclusion? *That the hour of*

God's judgment is come (Rev. xiv. 7); that the Lord is about to build up Zion, *and is, therefore, about to appear in his glory.* (Psalm cii. 16.)

In each case, if the one be true, the other is true likewise, for the one is the very forerunner of the other. And if our attention be directed to the events which have lately occurred in the East, and consider how wide a door has been opened in China for the introduction of the preached Word: when we also call to mind the becoming zeal which has been evinced by many who reject the doctrines we have been advocating, we cannot fail to observe how they are actually uniting to bring about these very purposes of God, and are hastening his kingdom.

The practical duty from the whole appears to be this: *to search the Scriptures of the Prophets, with reference to the second advent of the Lord, and to prepare for the things which, with that advent, are surely coming on the earth.* The first, because the most important of all, is the return of our Lord in glory; and what heart is able to conceive, and, therefore, what tongue to describe, the attendant circumstances of that event? It is enough for us to know that that event is sure; and that that sure event is nigh: that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry;" and that in that day "the just shall live by faith." Hence,

as the Lord has warned the Church, and through the Church, the world, of his approach, and the very notes of this warning are even sounding in our ears, it becomes us not to refuse to hear, but rather to hear and believe that we may live. Hence, as he has long before furnished us with a course of predicted events, to be fulfilled during the last times, some of which were to begin to be accomplished shortly after they had been revealed (see Rev. i. 1, and xxii. 6); and we can now look back upon our own history and see that the accomplishment of by far the greater part has actually taken place, surely it is our highest wisdom not to close our eyes against this solemn fact, and its more solemn consequence, *that upon us the ends of the world are come, and that this generation shall witness the advent of the Lord in glory, to introduce the millenary reign of righteousness and peace.* We do not expect that "the world" shall receive our testimony, for the word of God predicts, that that day shall overtake it as a thief. We do not anticipate, that the nearness of the Lord's approach will become a favourite subject of divinity in the Church, for the Lord intimates that this will not be the case; and in this there will be a parallel between the state of the professing Church as touching his first and last appearing. "I have

not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," he remarked, at his first advent. The visible Church rejected him in a body. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And when he comes next unto his own, will he find the Church prepared for his appearing? "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" Of this, I conceive, he speaks in these words, and the inference is clear, that he will not find it. There shall be comparatively few in a waiting posture to receive him. Faith in that advent is the scriptural state of preparation, a living principle of faith opposed to that described in the parable, which leads many to say, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" for where this is found it teaches them that have it to "look for him;" and "unto them that look for him, shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation."

Another, and most important expectation, connected with that advent of the Lord, is the first resurrection. Here I say little concerning it, because it is to form, God willing, the special subject for an occasion similar to the present: but by way of applying the doctrine, which has been delivered, I merely name it as one of those stupendous events which should excite us to a diligent search of the Scriptures whether these things be so; and, therefore, whether it be not

consistent with our highest interest and duty to give them the greatest heed. When we reflect, that in that day of which we speak, sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away, they who know what sorrow and sighing mean may well desire it. When we are assured, that in that day God himself shall wipe away tears from all faces, they who too well know what it is to shed tears of bitterness may well long for its rising, as then they shall bid an eternal farewell to all the troubles of our fallen humanity, and exchange them for joy unspeakable and fulness of glory.

NOTE A.

It may be objected, that if St. Paul designed to describe, as Mede concludes that he did, and I believe correctly, the apostasy of the Romish Church, by the words of 1 Tim. iv. 1—3, this explanation of the term, "latter times," cannot be maintained. The reply is readily furnished. The apostasy of the Romish Church, and her persecution of the saints (Dan. vii. 21, 25), were to occupy a long period of "the last days," that is, 1260 years, of little more than 1800; and as the persecuting power of the Papacy was to exist with more or less intensity during that period (Dan. vii. 26), and shall only be destroyed at the close of the last days, the predicted period, commencing, as we believe, in the sixth century, *and continuing to the end*, is correctly described by the term of

"the latter days," here employed, in the sense to which we have alluded.

NOTE B.

It was expected, I believe, by some, that a reference would have been made in this lecture to the specific numbers which are found in Scripture to bear upon the coming of the Lord. But, as the evidence to *the time of the second advent* was to be confined to the New Testament, it rendered it almost impossible to do this, as the numbers, which are found in the Old Testament, are necessary to form a complete scheme.

LECTURE IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ON THE TIME OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

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ZECH. XIV. 5.

*“ And the Lord my God shall come, and all the
saints with thee.”*

It is a solemn subject on which we are to treat this night. “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him!” It is to prepare for this that we are called to preach, and you to hear. Endeavour, then, as much as you can, to make the application to yourselves, of all we shall now bring before you. Feel assured that of all such knowledge which we communicate you must give an account; and listen to-night, not as you would to a lecture on science, but with the earnest desire to be wise unto salvation, and to gain a deeper

acquaintance with those heart-stirring truths, the full development of which is reserved for the everlasting joy which awaits the Church of God at the right hand of its Father. We are often told that these things are not *practical*. Now we know the contrary. But still it is very true that much teaching may be necessary before we can come to the practical application, or before you are capable of that application. It is a subject of the very principles of which the Church for a long time has been exceedingly ignorant. It involves a portion of the Word of God, which for many ages has been comparatively shut up. The prophecies of the Old Testament have, for the most part, been read with as much of a veil on the heart of the Christian, as there was formerly on the heart of a Jew, with reference to their true understanding. And until, therefore, we have brought out the principles of their scriptural interpretation, and made our people acquainted with them, it is impossible in the nature of things to bring this great subject to a practical bearing on their consciences. We must first *interpret*, and afterwards *apply*.

It will be unnecessary for me to dwell here on these principles of interpretation, as they have already been explained and established in the *first* lecture. I must only remind you that all I have

to offer on the subject, proposed for our present meditation, is founded on those principles, and proceeds on the supposition that they are admitted. If any demur to their admission, the following remarks must, under such circumstances, not be considered as intended for them. Our subject to-night, then, is defined to be "the Doctrine of the Old Testament on the Time of the Second Advent." And here I would premise that I intend to say very little myself on the point. My object will rather be to let Scripture speak for itself, a remark or two being occasionally thrown in to point out the results which appear justly and fairly deducible from the passages quoted. May the Holy Ghost condescend abundantly to bless his own word to all our hearts, for our abiding instruction and comfort!

I. To the question, then, What does the Old Testament state as to the time of Christ's second personal advent in glory? we answer, that it will be before the Millennium.

By Millennium, I mean, of course, that period of 1,000 years mentioned in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation. This expression does not occur, nor is the period defined, in the Old Testament; but it is nevertheless easily and certainly identified with the days there spoken of, when the "knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the

waters cover the sea," and the whole earth shall be restored to holiness and beauty.

Out of the many passages, therefore, which speak of the coming of the Lord in the Old Testament, it will be my object to select those which establish its relative connexion with this glorious period. I will mention them in the order in which they stand in the Word of God.

1. Let us begin with the Book of Psalms; and in the *second* Psalm we have at once a brief outline of the events, the order of which we are in search of. In verses 1—3, we have the rage of the Heathen and their princes described. These verses are quoted (Acts iv. 25, 26), as applicable to the circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion; and so they certainly are, but still it is evident that the words did not then receive their full accomplishment, if we are to understand them, as we feel bound to do, in their literal meaning. For he did not *then* speak unto the Heathen in his wrath, or vex them in his sore displeasure; but, on the contrary, he gave the Jews up to the fury of the Gentiles, and they ruled over them. We refer them, therefore, to the final rage of the Heathen and of the kings of the earth against Christ. The Lord then, in verses 4, 5, declares how he will treat them. In verse 6, he states, by prophetic anticipation, the setting up of Jesus as King on

the literal Zion, which we shall find spoken of afterwards again and again. In verse 7, is set forth the decree of which this exaltation is the result, namely, his Sonship declared with power by his resurrection from the dead: together with the promise connected with it, that he should have the Heathen for his inheritance, and that he should execute upon them his tremendous judgments in fully establishing his authority.

Now, on all this it is enough for our purpose to remark, that we have here the coming of Christ implied in his being set on the Hill of Zion; and instead of what is usually called the final judgment and the destruction of all earthly things, we have our Lord *subsequently* receiving the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that is, in other words, his coming to reign on Mount Zion is before the Millennium.

This passage does not mention the *coming* of the Lord distinctly, though it most clearly implies it, but I thought it best to notice it, as standing first in the remarkable book from which it is taken. Our argument from it may be met by a spiritual interpretation; but we may just repeat, once for all, that we have no intention here of attempting to answer principles, which we must be allowed, in this discourse, to consider as already disposed of.

A few other Psalms, out of many, where the sequence of events will be found exactly similar, are the 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 68th, 72d, 89th, 96th—99th, and 102d.

2. The next passage to which I refer you in proof of our position is Isaiah ix. In the former verses of the chapter, the *first* coming of our Lord is evidently referred to; but in the fourth and fifth verses the passage passes on, as is continually the case, to his *second* coming, at which the battle is described to be with burning, and fuel of fire: while in the 7th verse Christ is set forth as sitting upon the throne of David, to order it and to establish it from that time for ever. Here is, therefore, again the Millennium after Christ's coming.

3. The same is the case in the eleventh chapter of the same prophet. Verses 1—5 describe the reign of the Messiah as the literal Son of David in righteousness and judgment. He is called distinctly a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots. And, after a statement of the vengeance he shall execute upon his enemies, there follows one of the clearest prophecies to be found anywhere of the Millennial blessedness of the earth (verses 6—9), with the calling in of the Gentiles (verse 10), and the full glory of the Jews (verse 11 to end, and chap. xii.).

4. In Isaiah xxiv.—xxvii., we have the same

line of prophecy, in a much more extended form. This portion well deserves the closest examination. I will only refer you especially to chap. xxiv. 23, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously:" and to the results of this coming, as subsequently stated, more particularly, chap. xxvi. 1, "*In that day* shall this song be sung in the *land of Judah*; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks," &c.: and chap. xxvii. 12, 13, "And it shall come to pass *in that day*, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Here we have, as plainly as possible, the period of millennial blessedness, succeeding the personal advent of Jesus, and the result of it.

A few other passages in this same prophet, where the same view is either stated or implied, are as follows:—Isaiah ii—iv; xxx. 17, to the end; xxxv. 4, &c.; xl. 10, 11; lix. 16, &c.; lxi. 1, &c.,

compared with lxii. 10—12; lxiii. 1—6; lxvi. 5, 6, 15, to the end.

5. In Jeremiah iii. 17, 18, we find Jerusalem is to be the throne of the Lord as their then present king, and that *in those days* “the house of Judah is to walk with the house of Israel” “in the land of their fathers.” But in chap. xxiii., and at much greater length in chap. xxxiii. 14, and following verses, we have a still more explicit statement. In verse 14, we have these remarkable words: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform the good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.” And when we inquire what this is,—“In those days,” he adds, “and at that time, will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.” What is this but a personal advent and a personal reign?—“In those days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.” What is this but a millennium succeeding? The remainder of the chapter, which we cannot quote here, should be carefully read and considered.

Other passages in this prophet are, chap. xxv. 30, &c.; xxx. 1, &c.; xxxi. 22, to the end; with several more.

6. In Ezekiel, among other passages, we find

the following:—xliii. 7—9, “And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever; and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.” xliv. 2, “Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.” xlviii. 35, “And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.”

We are at a loss to know what such passages as these mean, if a personal presence of Christ on earth is not intended; while they as clearly indicate, that the result of that presence, and not a preliminary to it, will be that state of holiness and happiness on this our world, extending both to Jews and Gentiles, which we call conventionally the millennium.

Other passages are, Ezek. xxxiv., xxxvi., xxxvii., and following.

7. In opening the prophecies of Daniel, we turn at once to the seventh chapter. On the interpretation of this passage there is considerable diversity of opinion; and yet, for the most part, none which affects the point we are seeking to demonstrate. The millennium is clearly identified in verses 14 and 27, the former of which is, “And there was

given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." And if any question could remain, whether this kingdom were in heaven or in earth, it is distinctly called, in ver. 27, "the kingdom *under* the whole heaven." Now, whatever the four beasts be interpreted to signify, the fourth is destroyed at the coming of the Ancient of days; who, from the interpretation of the vision in the latter part of the chapter, and from the parallel passage in Rev. i., I have no doubt is Christ. And this coming is, as clearly as possible, previous to the period of blessedness, which we have above shown to be identical with the millennium. If, however, "the Son of man" (or, as it ought more properly to be, "a son of man"), who seems to me to symbolize the saints, be considered to be our Lord, his coming is clearly enough at the same time, and the argument from the passage remains unshaken.

To those who believe that Michael is our Lord, the twelfth chapter, ver. 1, taken in its connexion, is at once equally conclusive. If, as my own impression is, he is not our Lord, but the created archangel, the same conclusion, of the advent of the Saviour being premillennial, is arrived at

through 1 Thess. iv. 16; where the descent of Christ from heaven, and the voice of the archangel (Michael, Jude 9) are linked closely together.

We will now proceed to notice a few passages in the minor prophets, including that from which our text is taken: a very limited selection is all we can bring before you.

8. In Joel iii. 16, 17, 20, 21, we read as follows:—"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God *dwelling in Zion*, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. . . . But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." (See also the whole prophecy.)

Now any comment upon such a passage must be needless; if, that is, we understand words to mean what they express. Here, as plainly as possible, is the coming and presence of the Lord in Zion; and as plainly the blessedness of the Jews *afterwards*, which is characteristic of the millennium.

It is attempted, indeed, to turn the edge of this passage by the circumstance of Peter's quoting it on the day of Pentecost; but the answer to this is very simple. The prophecy of a future event may afford a most apt illustration of an event passed or passing; and in this case it may be used quite independently of its context, and without any reference to its actual fulfilment: while, on the other hand, an event can only fulfil a prophecy really and truly, and not merely by accommodation, when it answers accurately to the prophecy in itself and in its connexion. Now in the passage before us, the prophecy quoted by Peter is fastened down (Joel iii. 1) to those days and to that time when the Lord shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. While, therefore, the prophecy strikingly illustrates the Pentecostal effusion, the latter can never be admitted as the plenary and strict fulfilment of it.

9. In Micah ii. 12, 13; iv. 1—8; v. 1, &c., we find prophetic statements of the same clear character. It will be sufficient to quote the last of these, especially as it affords a valuable instance of the close connexion in prophecy of the first and second advents. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be *ruler in Israel*; whose goings

forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed (*rule, marg.*) in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall *he be great unto the ends of the earth*. And this man shall be the *peace*, when the Assyrian (i.e., the Antichrist) shall come into our land."

The above is so exactly parallel to the passages already quoted, that there is no necessity to make any comment.

See also, Zephaniah iii. 8, to the end, which is, if possible, still more explicit.

10. The last passage I shall quote (though it would be easy to multiply such passages tenfold) is Zech. xiv., from which the text is taken. Perhaps no passage is more clear, full, and striking, than this, in reference to this subject, in the whole book of God; and hence every effort has been made, by the opponents of the premillennial advent, to rebut this application of it, and to establish another. Let us quote a few verses at length. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city

shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

Now one interpretation of this passage is that which makes it all figurative. This, after what has been said, I need not here stop to notice. Another interpretation, however, applies it at once to the destruction of Jerusalem, and on this I shall be fairly expected to say a few words.

First, then, such an interpretation admits, that the passage has been *literally* fulfilled; and this is a considerable concession; because it is clear, in that case, that there is nothing in the passage itself to make a *figurative* interpretation at all *necessary*: it is only extraneous considerations that must have led persons to such a mode of explaining it.

Secondly, there is a confusion, after all, in this interpretation, of the literal and figurative; for the destruction of the city and the standing on mount Olivet are made literal; but the coming of the Lord and the earthquake are made figurative.

And this becomes necessary, not from any indication in the passage of such a distinction, but from the impossibility of finding a sufficient number of literal events to correspond with it: and,

Thirdly, those which are admitted to be literal must be supposed inaccurate and out of order; for our Lord's standing on Mount Olivet was long *before*, instead of *after* or *at* the destruction of Jerusalem; and the history of that siege anything but verifies the circumstances stated in the second verse of this chapter.

Take, now, the chapter in its simple grammatical meaning, and what is the epitome of its statement? That the Jews in the end of their present tribulation being gathered to Jerusalem, shall undergo severe suffering, and be reduced to great straits:—that at this time the Lord shall “go forth,” “come,” “stand *with his feet*,” on Mount Olivet; rescue his people, the Jews; and destroy his and their enemies:—that he shall then be King over all the earth; and, the Millennium succeeding and not having preceded, Jerusalem shall be built again; the Jews be restored in holiness and prosperity, and all the Gentiles partake of their blessing and glory.

We might easily add other passages to the above; but let these suffice. Each one is only the repetition of the same unvarying testimony,

“Christ will come personally *before* the Millennium.”

It scarcely seems to me necessary, and yet I will add just two remarks in corroboration of the above argument from Scripture.

First. Besides these and similar passages where Christ's personal coming is plainly stated, there are a very large number of other passages where it is implied, and which suppose him present on Mount Zion during the Millennium. These will be readily remarked in reading. We would only observe, that this is just what we should expect in the Word of God; where the completeness of a statement is often made designedly to depend on the comparing of different passages, and combining the truth of all.

Secondly. While numberless passages all state clearly the pre-millennial personal advent of Jesus, there is not a single passage, which can be produced from the Old Testament, and it would be easy to show that this remark might be extended to the New, to prove that there is any advent of Christ *after* the Millennium. (Rev. xx. 11. is the only passage I am aware of, on which such an interpretation might be forced; but even there not one syllable is said of our Lord's *coming*. Matt. xxv. 31, &c., from its connexion I cannot admit to be at all capable of it.)

II. Having, I trust, established, on those principles at least of interpretation which alone I can deem legitimate, that the second personal advent of our Lord is pre-millennial, it might be expected that I should say something of the actual date when it is likely to take place. This, however, I am quite unable to do, not yet seeing my way clear to the conclusions on this subject which some valued brethren have arrived at. Still it may be well here to note its connexion with some other events, as stated in the Old Testament, to serve as a guide to those who may be anxious to trace its position in the course of future events. The following brief remarks may suffice for this purpose:—

It will be at a time of general confusion, perplexity, fear and trouble. (Isaiah xxiv.)

The Jews, that is, a great portion of them, will be undergoing very severe persecution and oppression in their own land, and Jerusalem itself will be in a state of siege. (Zech. xiv. 1—3.)

It will happen at the end of the fourth monarchy prophesied of by Daniel. (Chap. vii.)

It will be subsequent to the appearing of the Prophet Elijah, who will be the forerunner of the second advent, as John the Baptist, who came only in his “spirit” and “power,” was the forerunner of the first. (Malachi iv.)

It will also be at the time when the saints are

raised, which corresponds exactly with the New Testament. (Compare Isaiah xxv. 8, with 1 Cor. xv. 54.)

It only remains, then, that I endeavour briefly to apply the whole subject by a few remarks.

The view that we have put before you is clear and definite. The second coming of Christ, under this aspect, is not left in all those generalities of time and circumstance, which from our very constitution leave us with so little practical impression.

It may, like every other doctrine, be held in such a way as to be merely speculative and formal; nay, it may be associated in some minds with expectations that are altogether carnal. It may be held as a theorem in science, or be the dream of a sensual spirit. But to those who know Christ, it must—it will—be precious, for it is full of him from beginning to end; and all that savours of Christ, and testifies of him, must be spiritual, powerful, and profitable to those who are taught by his Spirit. So far, indeed, from blinding the eyes of the Christian to the glory of God, it lays open, harmonizes, and crowns with the most transcendent majesty all the purposes of God. It is the key to all God's past and present providential arrangements, because it clearly shows their ultimate design and bearing. In the first chapter of Genesis, you stand, as it were, at the

head of time, and look on creation in its beauty. But a cloud comes over it, before you have read through three chapters; and all creation is marred, and sunk into the darkness of sin and death. Still, in that very third chapter, light shoots across the dismal abyss of misery, and one ray of hope from the Sun of Righteousness pierces the obscurity, "It shall bruise thy head." The conflict, of which the blessed issue is thus concisely described, goes on in trouble, sin, and suffering. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and the world, and they that dwell in it, are oppressed by the Evil One. We come down at length to the end of four thousand years, and the Sun of Righteousness arises: but it is in clouds and darkness. Christ comes, but it is in humiliation; he redeems, but it is by his blood. He is despised and rejected of men; and the Lord lays on him the iniquity of us all. He leaves the grave and ascends up on high: but still the conflict goes on; still this world remains the scene of sin, and misery, and death; and notwithstanding the countless number that have been rescued through the great salvation, there are symptoms of unbelief waxing more dominant than ever, and of iniquity abounding to the full. But yet the time is fast running out; and soon he that shall come, will

come and will not tarry. And *then*, no longer will the darkness contend with the light, no longer will the struggle seem to be doubtful, or the throne of the universe to be in abeyance; no longer will heavenly truth throw out its scattered and broken beams upon our sin-smitten earth; but out of the midst of fearful convulsion, and tremendous storm, with flame of devouring fire shall the Sun of Righteousness arise in mid-day splendour, with healing under his wings, and bless our creation to its remotest bound with his everlasting and unclouded light.

And now then you see what will come of all the purposes of God. You see the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, superseded by the second man who is the Lord from heaven:—you see the world that stood simply under the law of creation, brought to the higher standing of the law of redemption;—and you see the glory of redemption made more glorious still by the glory of a complete salvation. And how is all this to be? Not, according to the common notion, by the destruction of the heavens and of the earth, but by their purification and renewal in righteousness and beauty. Then shall the morning stars again sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy; for when he bringeth again his first-begotten into the

world, he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him."

In conclusion, remember, the *cause* of all this is *redemption through the blood of Jesus*. Remember, the *fitness* for all this is that *holiness* without which no man shall see the Lord. Recollect, the *means* whereby you may attain all this, is that *precious faith* in a crucified Saviour which is the gift of God by the Holy Ghost. Remember, the *disposition of heart* you are to maintain towards all this is, that *hope* which maketh not ashamed, which entereth in within the veil. And finally, recollect, that the *condition* in which you are to meet all this is, that of diligent watchfulness and holy consistency, as those who are keeping their garments lest their shame appear in the day of Christ. The Lord present you with us faultless in that day before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. Amen.

LECTURE V.

THE DELAY OF THE SECOND ADVENT, ITS CAUSES AND PRACTICAL LESSONS.

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2 PET. III. 9—11.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”

It has been often observed that there exists a very

strong analogy between the *Word* and *works* of God. The more we study the book of creation, and compare it with the book of revelation, the more readily shall we draw the conclusion, that the same hand which formed the heavens and the earth, with all their varied contents, wrote for our guidance, the Word of Life, in characters not to be effaced.

We may easily perceive the truth of this position in the subject which has been allotted to me in the present course; which may be thus put in the form of a question, "Why should the Second Advent of our Lord be so long delayed, and what practical lessons does such a delay afford?" An inquiry which we should enter upon, not in the spirit of dictating times and seasons to God, but rather in the child-like spirit which desires to know what the Lord hath declared on such a question.

It is impossible not to remark that God has chosen to proceed slowly in some of his greatest works. This earth, with all its furniture, and all its inhabitants, might have sprung into existence at the Almighty fiat—it might have stood forth in all its completeness at the first utterance of Jehovah's voice: but this was not the plan of the great Architect. He willed that six days should be given up to the creation of this lower world:

wherein each portion was evolved in a quiet and excellent harmony. So, likewise, if we examine the separate parts of the animal and vegetable world, we shall find that the stateliest trees of the forest and the noblest species of the brute creation, are all slow in reaching their standard of perfection. All this prepares us to expect to find the same procedure of the Almighty One in the discovery of his will to a fallen world—an expectation which is abundantly met in every part of Revelation.

When man by transgression fell from that high and holy estate in which he was created, mercy interposed to stay the stroke of justice; and even proclaimed a gracious Mediator who was to bruise the arch-enemy's head, even though he was to endure many wounds in effecting the victory. Now, seeing that this promise was the germ of all God's revelation to guilty man; that it contained so much of mercy to a fallen world; that it held out the prospect of such a victory over Satanic malice, we might have thought that its accomplishment would not be long delayed. And when we perceive, that instead of the sudden appearance of the "seed of the woman,"* an apparatus of minute ritual services interposes—a series of prophecies are distinctly given, in which the dawn of

* Gen. iii. 15.

light is very gradually disclosed—we might, I say, be tempted to ask, Why all this delay—this continued postponement?—if indeed the promise held within its contents, all that tended to display the glory of Jehovah, and to dispel the terrible gloom which sin had cast over this lower world.

To these inquiries, we do not find that God has given any specific answer. All that he condescends to say to us is, that “When the *fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;”* leaving it for us to draw some general conclusions on the subject. We might suppose that the Lord intended to exhibit the utter worthlessness of all human systems, which had had full time for remedying the catastrophe of the fall, but without the slightest success; or we might conjecture that he intended to beget an earnest desire for the glorious Shiloh in the minds of men, by practically exhibiting the misery of this world, without Divine interference. Still no explanation is given, and we are called to repose in that supporting and wholesome truth; it is not for us “to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

This view of the Redeemer’s first advent, and

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

the long lapse of time which interposed between the first promise and its accomplishment, is of immense value in meditating on the delay which has occurred in the glorious appearance of the King of kings. It tends to prove that this hope may be big with events of the highest moment; that all others may be subordinate to this climax of Divine manifestation; and that we may have the most intense personal interest in this coming of the day of God; and yet that Infinite Wisdom has purposes of delay, in which, though we cannot fathom, we can readily acquiesce.

Is it possible, my brethren, that any one can read their Bible with holy attention and without prejudice, and not perceive that God has given a most special *prominence* to the advent of Messiah in glory, and to the setting up his kingdom of righteousness on the ruins of the degraded kingdoms of men? We might conclude that the very hope of meeting in our glorified nature the great Head of the Church, would be sufficient to animate the members of the mystical body in their walk through this thorny desert; and, doubtless, in this point of view, both the Lord and his apostles comforted the afflicted Church in days that are past. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you." "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto

the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”* And no marvel, for Christ is the beloved object of all who live by faith and not by sense; they even now behold the glory of the Lord shining in the face of Jesus Christ by a spiritual vision, to which the children of this world are strangers. They can see an excellency in the knowledge of their Saviour, to which no earthly acquirement can be compared. We are not, therefore, to be surprized that the prospect of seeing their Lord face to face; of beholding the Divine Majesty in the tempered mildness of the humanity; of being personally present with the once crucified but now exalted Lamb of God; should rivet their hope to a definite and expected event. If we could see no other reason for this looking and waiting for Christ, than the single idea, that in his presence is fulness of joy, it would be enough. We might still feel that as he has promised to return again in visible glory, so it is our joyful position to stand waiting for the Lord, our Master, and heavenly Bridegroom.

This, however, is far from being the case:

* James v. 7, 8.

besides setting forth the blessedness of waiting for the Lord, the Scriptures are express in showing, that great and important interests are tied to the second advent in such close alliance, that you cannot receive the one, without being more or less led to the consideration of the rest. I know that good and holy men have held otherwise, and have taught, that it would be better to pause at the threshold of prophetic inquiry and to be satisfied with the contemplation of the apocalypse of the Son of man. Now, whilst I admit that this is the main hope of the Church,—the common subject of our confession,—the important vantage-ground for looking onwards,—I cannot sever this radiant spot in the hemisphere of light from the many bright constellations that surround it. For example, we must not forget that the Lord Christ is promised a kingdom upon earth, the reward of his victorious sufferings, and the effect of his prevailing intercession. “Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;”*—a time when Zion shall no longer complain, “the Lord hath forsaken me,” but shall be restored to her own land in such

* Isaiah xlix. 8.

numbers and strength, that she shall exclaim, "The place is too strait for me: give place that I may dwell;"*—a time also, when the ends of the earth shall turn unto the Lord and live, seeing that the Father hath said to his well-beloved Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."† Will any one contend, that this kingdom of righteousness has yet been set up, except in some general principles of truth and holiness revealed in the word, and followed out by the few? Will any one assert, that Israel has been restored to God's favour, and the land of their heritage, or that the heathen now acknowledge the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? Assuredly they cannot maintain the affirmative; neither can they give the least warranty from Holy Writ (as appears to me), that Messiah's kingdom, in its prevailing and triumphant form, shall be ever set up, until he comes a second time in the clouds of heaven, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand of saints, with whom he will reign over a righteous and peaceful world.‡

We might proceed, in like manner, to show, that the Church of the living God cannot expect to

* Isaiah xlix. 20.

† Psalm ii. 8.

‡ See Dan. vii. 13, 14.

reach its ultimate perfection until the day-star arises on this world in the morning of the resurrection. We fully assent to the foundation-truth of the Gospel, that we are accepted only in the beloved, and that we can be presented to the Father without spot, or blame, or any such thing, only in the spotless robe of the Redeemer's imputed righteousness. We also hold with the Church in all ages, that the soul which has been quickened and sanctified by the Spirit's presence, is delivered from all the soil of sin and remaining corruption at the stroke of death, and is numbered among "the *spirits* of just men made perfect:" but then, we ask, is *the* Church, as a body, invested with all its robes of glory, and brought into the family inheritance, which shall, indeed, be *enjoyed* personally, but must be shared with all the members of the household of faith? I am persuaded, that nothing can be more opposed to the spirit of the Bible than a cold *isolation* in religion. Whilst we retain our individual position, and feel our individual responsibility, we are never to forget, that all our privileges are best enjoyed, and all our duties best performed, when we regard ourselves as the citizens of the Divine commonwealth and the members of the household of God. And if this view be essential to our present stability and usefulness, much more must it enter

into the prospects of the coming glory. This furnishes us with a satisfactory reply to the question, Why do the Scriptures dwell so emphatically on the resurrection period, and yet give such scanty hints on the state of the disembodied spirit? The answer might be, because the resurrection places the whole man before us in all his completeness; for though the body is the inferior part—the casket of the immortal and imperishable jewel—yet God has constituted man in such wise, that we cannot use the treasure nor even admire its beauty, in its separated condition, with anything like the advantage that belongs to it in its compacted form; but we may rather reply, that the Church of God has been given a decided, living, united form, and we cannot understand the Lord's dealings to it in time, nor contemplate its glory in the kingdom, if we ever lose sight of its *corporate* capacity. When Christ, the Head, is revealed in his glory, then shall his members appear with him,—all reflecting the image and glory of their Lord,—all united together in lovely symmetry,—all filling up the precise place and station which the prescient eye of God had marked out from all eternity.

But why, it may be inquired, do I thus dwell on some of the features of the coming kingdom?—My subject, I reply, demands such a glance at the

joy that is set before us at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thus learn to answer the question which has been allotted to me in a negative form;—the advent of our Lord is not delayed because it is a matter of inferior importance: on the contrary, it holds a conspicuous and prominent position in the map of revelation; and though it may be thrown designedly into the more distant prospect, yet, like the mountains that skirt the horizon, it has the first and brightest sunshine beaming upon its exalted head, and sends forth rills of comfort to refresh those who are toiling in the plain below in their efforts to reach the heights of glory.

There is another negative reply to the question, why the Omniscient has so long delayed the second advent of Messiah. It is not because the expectation of seeing such a day belongs to one generation of the Church, to the exclusion of the rest. I am not aware that any Churchman would professedly teach, that we are not personally to wait for the return of the Son of man, or openly deny, that we are to look for his manifestation in the clouds of heaven; but I do hold, that *practically* speaking, this view has been held and propounded by many whom we love as fellow-labourers in the ministry of our Lord.

If we compare the language of modern teachers

with the declarations of the word, and especially with the apostolic epistles, we shall be struck with the contrast. In the one case, men are reminded of their short stay upon earth,—they are called to dwell on the subject of death, as if it were the great subject of contemplation; they are urged to prepare for the hour of dissolution, as if there were no prospect more affecting, none more calculated to win the thoughts and desires to heavenly things. Not so the Scripture of truth;—there we find death is held out in all its solemn aspect. It is described as an enemy, whose strength we must prepare to conquer by the grace of God;—a monster, whose sting can only be made harmless by the cross of Emmanuel. But it is not, it cannot be the object of hope,—of holy and longing expectation. None can occupy this place in the eye of hope, but the adorable Saviour who once appeared amongst us in suffering flesh, and will yet return to this world in our glorified humanity. How interesting in this view is the described position of the Church, “looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God;” they are the people who wait for the Son from heaven; they are the *wise virgins*, who have long ago trimmed their lamps, and whom the first note of approach shall wake up, and behold they shall go forth to meet the bridegroom; they are the *servants* who

are steadily occupied in their allotted duties during the absence of the great Master, but wait with intense desire for the time when his friendly voice shall demand admittance, and his welcome feet once more stand on the sphere of our sorrows and pilgrimage.

And if we inquire still further, why such a contrast should exist between the teaching of the early Church and that of the modern Church, I can only attempt a solution by referring to the difference of views on the kingdom of righteousness, which is yet to prevail in this world. The modern Church has too often resorted to an allegorical mode of interpreting the Scriptures, where a literal one might better serve. Jerusalem is made the Christian Church; the Jews, the members of the same. The restoration of this people to God's favour and their own land is all melted down to a greater extension of the Christian religion; and the millennial state of peace and righteousness, is the removal of present evils and the carrying out of holy principles among the nations of the earth. All this is to be gradually effected by the Divine blessing on the means of grace we now have, and all to take place before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. With such views, the obvious answer to our inquiry would be, "That we believe that God intends gradually to convert mankind, and to

make this world a scene of righteousness and peace; and that the Lord delays his return until all this revolution takes place, and until the Jew, the Heathen, and the Mahomedan, are won over to the faith of Christ."

These views are widely different from those held by the Primitive Church, who took our text and similar passages in their literal bearing, and therefore expected a new heaven and a new *earth*, wherein righteousness should dwell. They did not make earth anything but earth; nor did they expect annihilation, but purification, by the terms of our text, where the elements are destined for a melting by fervent heat, and the earth and its works await the fire that shall consume all that belongs to sin and Satan. They expected the literal restoration of the ancient people of God and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the conversion of the Heathen, and the universal spread of light and peace; but all this, not before the day of the Lord, but coterminously with it; in a word, they expected no universal kingdom of righteousness and peace, until the Lord shall come—until the King arrives to dethrone the great usurper, Satan, and to take possession of his own rightful dominions.* With such hopes as these, you can

* See all these views, as belonging to the early Church, clearly set forth in Greswell's admirable work on the Parables, vol. i.

well imagine how men might "look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of God;" because, as far as they knew, the Lord might come in their own day and generation. But with the former, I do not understand how the position of personal waiting for Christ agrees. They who maintain that a millennium of blessedness will precede the advent, may look for such a period, as they may live daily in the expectation of death, but they are not actually and *personally* watching for the Lord's coming, as an event that might come to pass in their own time. They do not reject the doctrine of his second coming, but they place it at a vast distance, as the winding up of all things, and not as bearing on their present feelings and actual position.

I have dwelt on these things the more fully, because they appear to have an important bearing on my text; they may tend to show in what way the apostle answers the caviller; who, in the apparent delay of the Lord's final purposes exclaims, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (Ver. 4.) Now how does the apostle meet this cavil? By vindicating the faithfulness of God, we may reply, and thus announcing the blessed truth, that if the Lord does not at once fulfil all

he has promised, it is from no slackness of promise, no unwillingness of doing as he has said, no drawing back from bestowing a measure fully equal to his own declarations. All this he affirms, and then goes on to give the true reason of this delay—a reason which it may be profitable for us to dwell briefly upon, as furnishing us with views of God's exceeding rich mercy to the fallen children of Adam.

The reason then given in my text for this delay of the Lord's return, is thus clearly expressed, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." A declaration full of mercy to a guilty world, as it is eminently calculated to set before our eyes the character of our God. And yet even here controversy must interfere and raise its clamorous voice; instead of allowing us to stand and admire the depths and height of Divine condescension, we are called to debate, who are intended by "*usward*;" whether it includes all men, or only the elect; whether we must limit it to the family of God, or extend it to the whole race of man. On such a question, I have no wish here to enter; it would lead us far away from the practical part of our meditation. I would, therefore, dismiss it with this one remark, that it seems to be the expression of God's tender mercy to a fallen world,

to hold forth the comforting thought, that before the day of vengeance bursts upon the rebellious and obdurate, there is a period of long-suffering when God is willing to receive to his bosom of mercy the returning and penitent prodigal. Beyond this, there seems to be no data in the text for going into the question of limitation or universality. The period of our Master's absence is marked by the exceeding patience of God—he is waiting to be gracious—he now invites sinners to return unto him and to be saved.

But how does this one thought, my brethren, open before us the whole of that provision, which the love of God has made for the corrupt and guilty sons of Adam, and the great purposes which Divine wisdom had in view in such a provision? On these things we can only touch at present; they form the subject of our pastoral instruction, and of your constant lessons, and we trust that you will never cease to pray for all the ministers of Christ, that they will set forth the riches of redeeming love, without gainsaying, without *reserve*, without abridgement.

It would have preserved men from much confusion, if they had kept in mind that each dispensation had its precise character and distinct purpose, though all united in setting forth the same great truth of God's long-suffering and

mercy. In what may be termed the Abrahamic dispensation, we have the first palpable exposition of the promise made by God concerning the seed of the woman—the bruiser of Satan's head. Whilst God made arrangements for the preservation of his truth in selecting one nation to be his peculiar people, he at the same time renewed the promise of a Saviour, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Nor was the legal dispensation introduced to make the slightest change in these glorious promises, it was rather “added because of transgressions,” to exhibit all the deformity of that evil, which the Saviour would in due time remedy, and to restrain iniquity in its fearful and more outrageous character. The law, in this sense, both moral and ceremonial, was a large parenthesis in the book of God's mercy, which tended to delay men's arrival at the full period of light, but which like a well-chosen parenthesis, served to elucidate the great subject kept in view. It made men see the *necessity* of a Saviour's work and interference, whilst in its minute and diversified ritual it pointed onward to the real blood of sprinkling and the oil of consolation.

The dispensation of the Spirit, or, as it is sometimes termed, the Gospel-kingdom, has dawned upon this world with still clearer light

and far higher privileges, than any which had hitherto been disclosed to the sons of men. The Saviour, in our nature, has been fully revealed; the work of redemption, effected by his vicarious sufferings; the gift of the Spirit, poured out from the mercy-seat; the New Testament Church, set up in all the extensiveness of provision; the catholicity of its doctrine and discipline; the simplicity of its ordinances. And yet, be it remarked, the *unity* of purpose which had pervaded the former dispensation, was not abandoned in this; it was still to be the period of God's long-suffering to sinners, to the end that those who believed in his love, and repented of their sins, might live. There was still to be a delay of the Messiah's glorious advent, that love—free, unmerited love—might beam forth in all its peculiar lustre; that the whole of God's creation might have the most undoubted proof that he is love itself, when he manifested himself in the Lord Christ, and entreated sinners to be reconciled to him through their all-perfect surety.

There is not, my brethren, we firmly believe, a single hint in the Divine Scriptures, that these gracious offers would be *universally* accepted by men, during the Saviour's absence. We are rather prepared, by the consentaneous testimony of Christ and his apostles, to expect that the few would be

benefited by the word of reconciliation, whilst the multitude would remain in carnal indifference, formality, or ungodliness. The time of long-suffering on Jehovah's part would not indeed be thrown away; his purposes of mercy would be still carried out in the little flock, even though the majority of the world would despise the riches of his forbearance. We have the express assurance of God that his word should not return to him void, and the promise of the Saviour, that if he were lifted up from the earth, he would draw all men—that is, men of all nations, rank, and condition—to his fellowship and service. But we have no promise that conflict should cease during the dispensation of the Spirit, that the world would cease to hate the Church, that the way to salvation should be trodden by the multitude, and the gate of paradise lose its straitened aspect in the eyes of the majority; or, in a word, we have no expectation held out to us that the dispensation of the Spirit would *slide* into the dispensation of the kingdom, or that the latter was nothing more than the expansion of the former. All is clear and distinct in their own peculiar characteristics and sequence; the legal economy is not the same as the Abrahamic; the dispensation of the Spirit claims for itself a special position and honour, and is not to be confounded with any that has preceded.

Whilst the climax of all, the recapitulation of all, will be found in the setting up the kingdom of Messiah, when as a Priest he shall sit upon his throne, and as the Son of David he shall reign over his restored nation, and over a converted world.

I cannot help testifying that the question, How far we are to expect that God's long-suffering during the Messiah's absence will affect men, is deeply practical, and bears upon all the prophetic anticipations which God has given us in the word. If the notion held by a great number of sincere and devout Christians be true, that this world is to be evangelized by the efforts of the Church militant—accompanied by the dew of the Spirit—we must then expect that a gradual improvement will take place, and the time of God's long-suffering, instead of availing only to the gathering together of a Church out of the mass, will be efficacious to transform the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our God and his Christ. But if the Scriptures prepare us for the conflict of light and darkness to the end of this dispensation; if the little flock shall never cease to travel on through a toilsome way and bitter foes until the great Shepherd appear; if the latter days shall be marked by still greater confederacies of sinners and rebels against the Most High God;—and if

the *crushing* judgments of God are to fall on the kingdoms of men, to make way for the dominion of the true and lawful King; then I would say, the trumpet gives an uncertain sound that does not call the Church of God to stand on its watch-tower, and never to lay aside any portion of the heavenly armour, until the voice of the Son of God shall proclaim, "The great dragon is cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world;" and the voice in heaven shall respond, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of his brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."* In a word, we hold, that the true cause of the delay of Christ's second advent is, that in a time of such patience and long-suffering on the part of God, pardon should be proclaimed to the guilty, "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" for the great purpose of gathering out the Church of the living God; and that we are as clearly forbidden to extend this further, or suppose that all would acknowledge Christ as their Lord, during his abiding within the veil, and thus confound, in a misty and undefined exposition, the

* Rev. xiv. 9, 10.

dispensation of the Spirit with the future kingdom of Christ and his glorified saints.

And now, my brethren, I have to refer to some of those practical lessons which the delay of the Lord's advent seems calculated to impress on his professed followers. I am not called to dilate on the practical tendency of the doctrine itself, that Christ Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of David, is to return to this world in power and great glory. This is a theme too extensive for any one discourse, and will be best felt by pervading, as I am convinced it will, all the expositions given at this time concerning the Messiah's kingdom and the prospects of the Church. I am merely to show, that the delay of that blessed hour, which shall be the consummation of all our hopes, is fraught with lessons of deep meaning to all who are really waiting for the Lord from heaven; and herein I shall only attempt to give a few brief hints.

First. *During the Master's absence we are called to be his witnesses to a godless world.* It has ever been the character of that world, to follow after the things of sense, and to despise or neglect the realities of faith. They know nothing, indeed, of communion with the invisible world; all their hopes and feelings are tied down to time and its passing concerns: and hence it is, that the pro-

mised glory of the advent has no reality in their view; for they judge of things that are yet to come by things that are now. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" and, therefore, they argue, that all things may roll on in the same uniformity from age to age; they have no visible proof of such revolutions as the second advent of the Lord is expected to effect. I stop not to notice the apostle's refutation of such cavils, by a reference to the terrible deluge which overflowed the world and its inhabitants in one destructive catastrophe; it is enough for us to learn from such a cavil, that the unsanctified children of men are guided merely by the testimony of their senses, to the exclusion of the higher testimony of God's revelation: and yet even to them, the Lord of hosts has not left himself without witnesses. If they will not take his *naked* word, they shall have before them some living epistles, wherein the handwriting of God shall be seen in clear and legible characters.

How striking, in this point of view, is St. Paul's address to the Philippian Christians,—“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as

lights in the world;”* as if he would say, “Ye are appointed to be God’s witnesses to a dark and unspiritual generation, who dwell in the clouds of sin and ignorance: they shut their eyes, indeed, to that glorious light which is above them; but if you reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, they will be forced to remember that there is a God to know and an eternal kingdom to seek.” This sort of testimony comes across them continually; for it is met with in the holy deportment and decided walk of those who would honour Christ with more than lip-service. The careless and worldly can scarcely get rid of this admonition; they see it before them in clear and well-marked colours; they feel, that with the consistent Christian, religion is a reality, and they cannot help reflecting, if his tastes and pursuits be heaven-wards, theirs must have a tendency to the pit of corruption.

Oh! brethren, beloved in the Lord, ye that desire to follow the despised Saviour in his humiliation, remember that you are called to be his witnesses in the period of his absence. “Ye are the lights of the world; ye are the salt of the earth.” Your gracious Master must be honoured or dishonoured, according to the mode in which you occupy your post. Be not weary in well

* Phil. ii. 14, 15.

doing; never cease to watch. Walk in wisdom towards them who are without; and let it be your earnest prayer, that you may reflect the Saviour's image in all your way through life, that men may observe and feel it, and, in some cases at least, be led to glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Secondly. "*In your patience possess ye your souls,*" is another lesson which Christ would have his mourning Church well and deeply learn during his abode within the veil. It is, emphatically, *the time* of the Church's warfare and tribulation. The Lord has prepared us for weeping, whilst the ungodly are permitted to have a short and hollow triumph. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."* And the Psalmist prepares us for the triumph of the wicked, by saying, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself as a green bay tree." And so throughout the Scriptures, we are told, that the ungodly exalt themselves on every side, with high looks and proud thoughts, whilst the little flock of Christ are disregarded and cast out. Nor can they complain; for their beloved Master has walked in the same path before them, enduring for their sakes the contradiction of sin-

* John xvi. 20.

ners against himself, and receiving on himself all the violence of the storm, whilst he hung on the accursed tree. He could well say, "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. Ye shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake."

If, then, it has been necessary to remind the Church in all ages of the apostolic warning, "Ye have need of patience," it will be much more, I apprehend, as we hasten on to the last great crisis. The fourteenth chapter of the Apocalypse appears to me a portion of unfulfilled prophecy, and to refer to the last tribulation described by our Lord and the Prophet Daniel.* The Antichristian beast will call the professed followers of the Lamb to the alternative of yielding to his confederacy or of exposing themselves to the most bitter sufferings; but this faithful band shall hear the voice of the angel, which proclaims, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation:" and knowing that this is the warning of the faithful Amen, they shall be ready to endure any sorrow, even death itself, rather than deny their Lord and dishonour his name. Hence the exclamation of the apostle: "Here is the patience of the saints:

* Matt. xxiv. 21, 22. Dan. xii. 1, 2.

here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”* We may, my brethren, live to see those days,—we may be called to see the horrible raging of Satan in the *last of the last days*; but if not, we have still need of patience. All these evil principles are at work even in our favoured land, though as yet they cannot tell with overwhelming power, because they await concentration under some *visible* head; but they do work and strive with no common energy. Everything about us seems defiled and out of joint; there is a heaving of the sea of discord, which is felt to agitate and disquiet,—a sort of prelude of that fearful storm which will burst on the Church just previous to its eternal calm. We have now to meet with sorrows and bereavements in this world of separation; we have now to weep and lament over the uprisings of the evil principle which we have inherited from Adam, and which struggles so hard against the heavenly nature implanted by Christ;—all this we have now to meet, and therefore we have need of patience. Your Lord would have you learn this lesson daily, whilst yet he tarries in the heavenly sanctuary, and has not set out to take possession of his millennial kingdom. But then he gives you the sweet assurance, that the delay is short, and that

* Rev. xiv. 12.

very soon we shall behold him in his robes of majesty, attended by myriads of holy angels and glorified saints, proclaiming with a voice of supremacy, that shall be heard to the utmost bounds of creation, "Behold, I make all things new."

Thirdly, and lastly. *This is the time for the Church to aim at winning souls to God.* When the Archangel's trumpet shall be heard, the period of sowing and planting shall come to an end. I do not mean that the glorified saints shall be unoccupied in dealing out the bounties of Jehovah to his dependent creatures: far otherwise; ours shall be an eternity of *holy activity* as well as heartfelt praise; but then it will not be that peculiar work which Christ has delegated to his Church during the dispensation of the Spirit. He has appointed a ministry of poor, weak, and sinful men, to proclaim the word of reconciliation, and to call sinners to repentance; to feed the household of faith, and train up the children of God for the manhood of glory: and under their direction and pastoral superintendence, every member of Christ has something to do in promoting the salvation of souls. For as the Bible knows nothing of priestly domination, or of absorbing our idea of the Church into one class of men,—viz., the appointed pastors,—so neither does it countenance those *erratic* labours that seek to let

the river of mercy refresh the weary traveller, without reference to its appointed channel. As we are convinced that the Church of God ought never to rest in mere form and shadow, or dream away its time in discussing ceremonial observances, so we feel assured that all the efforts for evangelizing or educating the masses of our population, without the sacred influence of the Church's system, is nothing more than a laborious waste of time.

Oh! Sirs, it is the time for calling sinners to repentance,—of snatching, instrumentally, precious, immortal souls, from Satan's embrace, and placing them in the refuge opened for them in the wounded side of Immanuel! Have you tasted the efficacy of redeeming love?—have you found a resting-place in the sure promises of the word?—then, I beseech you, be occupied in the work of the Lord, shake off all sloth and unscriptural timidity, and give your best energies to the noble employment of advancing the interests of never-dying souls! Or are there any here who still halt between two opinions? who confess that Christ's service is the best, yet are in the thralldom of the world's vanities and pursuits? Oh, cast off this dangerous indecision! The door of mercy is still open, but it must be entered; the hands of the high priest are still lifted up before the mercy-

seat, but you must place a sincere, believing petition in them ere the day of vengeance arrives. Delay not a day, not an hour. Arise, your Saviour calleth you !—but he does it with that deep and solemn emphasis, “ Behold, I come quickly.”

LECTURE VI.

THE SIGNS OF THE SECOND ADVENT IN THE STATE OF THE WORLD AT LARGE.

BY THE REV. J. W. BROOKS, M.A.,
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LUKE XXI. 25—28.

“ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

I FEEL awed, brethren, by the solemnity, and embarrassed by the magnitude of the subject,

which I have been specially requested to bring before you,—viz. “The Signs of the Second Advent in the state of the world at large.” They are on the one hand such as to impress my own mind with a deep persuasion, that we are on the eve of events of immense—*immense* importance to mankind: they will, on the other hand, require me to enter so much into detail, that I could not venture to trespass to such an extent upon your patience, were I not encouraged by the assurance, that the subject must excite a more than ordinary interest in those who truly believe the Word of God.

I am admonished, however, by the greatness of the task, that I must not occupy time by remarks which are not absolutely necessary; and will therefore content myself with earnestly beseeching you to lift up your hearts in silent prayer to God, that his Word may now be accompanied by the demonstration of his Holy Spirit, and be mixed with faith in us all.

The signs to which I have to draw your attention may be classed into *political*, *natural*, and *religious*.

Those which are comprehended in the text first demand attention, and may appear to some to belong to the class of *natural* phenomena; but they are nevertheless, in reality, *political* signs, as

I hope presently to convince you. Before however I enter upon the description of them here given, it is necessary that I make a few remarks, explanatory of the subject which is before us in general, in order that it may be clearly understood.

The signs then, of which I am about to treat, are styled in our Prospectus, and justly so, “the Signs of the Lord’s *Advent* ;”—which advent, agreeably with what is intimated in the text, is for the *redemption* of his people ;—of his people *Israel*, to whom the words of the text were specially addressed ; and who were to have the Gospel of redemption in every case first preached to them ;—and of those likewise, who, though not his people by natural descent from Abraham, are nevertheless, by the unspeakable grace vouchsafed to them of like *faith* with Abraham, accounted to be his seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

It must be borne in mind, however, that before Israel shall be redeemed as a nation, there is to come what the Prophet Jeremiah calls “*the time of Jacob’s trouble* ;”†—that previous to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, when he will celebrate his nuptials with his Bride, the Church, there is to come “the great day of the *wrath* of the

* Gal. iii. 7, 29.

† Jer. xxx. 7.

Lamb," when his vengeance is to fall upon his enemies.* The judgments which will then fall upon the nations, and sweep over the face of the globe, with the suddenness and rapidity of the hurricane, form the great burden of Prophecy:—together with the advent of the Lord for the deliverance of his people. For such will be the tribulation, that except those days were shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the *elect's sake*—his elect nation, Israel, and the election of grace, partakers of the Holy Spirit, whether Jew or Gentile,—those days will be shortened,† by the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,—the Son of Man coming with power and great glory.

I have said, that these things form the great burden of Prophecy: turn to the prophets, and you will find that they one and all make mention of these times and events. The crisis of affliction commences with the great *earthquake* or revolution described by St. John, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty and so great;‡ it is “the *shaking* of all nations” mentioned by Haggai,§—and it is “God’s *controversy* with the nations” set forth by Jeremiah. || This produces

* Rev. vi. 16, 17.

† Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

‡ Rev. xvi. 18.

§ Hag. ii. 7.

|| Jer. xxvi. 31.

the *gathering of the nations* in the Holy Land, according to Zechariah;* they are the “*multitudes in the valley of decision*” foretold by Joel;†—they are “the kings of the earth and of the *whole world*, gathered to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, in the place called *Armageddon*,” as revealed in the Apocalypse.‡ The same insurrection of evil doers constitute “the *floods of great waters*” of the Psalmist;§—the “*overrunning flood*” of Nahum,||—and “the *rushing of mighty waters*”¶ of Isaiah. Ezekiel describes its approach as a *storm* that is to ascend and come like a cloud;**—Habakkuk and Jeremiah as a great *whirlwind*;††—which tempest brings upon the whole earth, as well as upon the Jews, the unparalleled “*time of trouble*” mentioned by Daniel;‡‡ and Joel’s “*day of darkness and of gloominess*.”§§. This period of tyranny, of anarchy, and oppression, will be dissipated by judgments *still more dreadful*, poured upon the enemies of the Lord. It ends in “the great and dreadful *day of the Lord*” spoken of by Malachi;||| even “the day of the Lord upon

* Zech. xiv. 2.

† Joel iii. 14.

‡ Rev. xvi. 14—16.

§ Ps. xxxii. 6.

|| Nah. i. 8.

¶ Isa. xvii. 12, 13.

** Ezek. xxxviii. 9.

†† Hab. iii. 14; Jer. xxv. 32; xxx. 23, 24.

‡‡ Dan. xii. 1.

§§ Joel ii. 2.

||| Mal. iv. 5.

all the Heathen," predicted by Obadiah.* For Jeremiah informs us, that these nations are all blinded and infatuated, by being made to drink of the wine-cup of God's fury;†—and Zechariah, that every horse shall therefore be smitten with astonishment, and every rider with madness;‡ and this, (as Zephaniah testifies) and their gathering together, is to afford opportunity for God to pour out his indignation upon them, and to devour the earth with the fire of his jealousy;§—"a vengeance in anger and fury upon the Heathen, (says the Prophet Micah,) such as they have not heard."|| "For the Lord shall roar out of Zion, and cause his glorious voice to be heard;"—"his feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives;"—"he shall behold and drive asunder the nations;"—and "he shall show the lighting down of his arm with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of devouring fire, and with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones;"—and "they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind: and, behold, at evening time *trouble*; and before the morning *he is not*."¶

I have deemed this brief epitome needful, in

* Obad. 15. † Jer. xxv. 15—17. ‡ Zech. xii. 4.

§ Zeph. iii. 8. || Mic. v. 15. ¶ Joel iii. 16. Isa. xxx. 30. Zech. xiv. 4. Isa. xvii. 13. Hab. iii. 6.

order that you may duly understand, that the advent of Christ is not the event which is *immediately* to follow those political signs to which I am about to draw your attention, though it is nigh at hand, even at the doors. These tokens indicate rather, that the great and rapid apostasy from the faith,—and that lawless outbreak of physical power,—and the political tyranny and usurpation, which together constitute the last form and actings of *Antichrist*, are about *immediately to be revealed*;—which must first have its terrible, but brief career, fulfilling many prophecies;—and when, in this last form, Antichrist has been developed, and grown to his full dimensions, *then* it is that the Lord comes and treads them in his anger, and tramples them in his fury. For Isaiah assures us, “that the day of vengeance is in his heart,” at the very time “when the year of his redeemed is come.”*

Now the political crisis, to which I request your attention, is thus depicted by our Lord in the text: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven

* Isa. lxiii. 3, 4.

shall be shaken." The character of the celestial portion of these signs is more fully described in St. Matthew's Gospel.—"The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."*

I take this language to be *figurative* and *symbolical*; for though we are bound, in the exposition of prophecy, as in the interpretation of every other portion of holy writ, to adopt, as a general rule, the most *literal* acceptance of its terms,—without which we may make anything of Scripture, and advance the most conflicting and uncertain hypotheses;—yet, like most other general rules, it has its obvious exceptions.

I might in the case before us except, that a literal shaking of the heavens, to produce the effects described in the text, would also of necessity destroy this world and the inhabitants thereof;—whereas it is clear, that whatsoever these things signify, they only cause a universal *terror*, not an utter destruction;—"men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things which are *coming on the earth ; for*" (adds our Lord, as if explaining the cause of this terror) "the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

* Matt. xxiv. 29.

Observe, brethren, I do not mean to assert, that there will be no heavenly prodigies, or terrible natural phenomena, attending the advent of Christ. A meteor or star indicated his birth, and a supernatural darkness marked his death; and it is not improbable but God may show various wonders in the natural heavens at his second advent. What I would insist on is, that no such things are intended in the text; but that the signs here described occur *previous* to the Lord's appearing, and are the *forerunners* only of still more awful events, which are coming on the earth.

The principal reason however for this conclusion has yet to be considered:—which is, *the frequent occurrence of signs similar to these, in prophecies which already have been accomplished; together with the explanatory indices which are in some places inserted.* For Prophecy has certain tropical expressions peculiar to itself, the general analogy of which we are bound to consider, if we desire a consistent interpretation. In which case, I beg you to observe, we do not, by resorting to a figurative sense, give the rein to the imagination, for men to invent or adopt any interpretation whatsoever, without warrant from Scripture, (as many do, and call it *spiritual*;) but we follow a fixed, a clearly defined, and readily ascertained sense,

which the Holy Ghost hath pointed out. I must beg your attention to a few examples bearing on the point in hand.

In Isaiah xiii. 9, 10, is the following oracle (or *burden*, as it is called) concerning Babylon—"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the *stars of heaven*, and the *constellations thereof*, shall not give their light: the *sun* shall be darkened in his going forth, and the *moon* shall not cause her light to shine." And at verse 13,—“Therefore I will *shake the heavens*, and the *earth* shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.” Now the seventeenth verse expressly declares, that this relates to the conquest of Babylon by the Medes.

Another instance is Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8, concerning *Egypt*: “And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the *heaven*, and make the *stars* thereof dark: I will cover the *sun* with a cloud, and the *moon* shall not give her light: *all the bright lights of heaven* will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.” At verse 11 of this prophecy, and also in chap. xxx. it is declared, that these things were to be accomplished on Egypt by the sword of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

In Isaiah xxxiv. we have a third instance of the use of these expressions, applied to the destruction of the kingdom of *Idumea*; though it has a further aspect toward the *last days*, when it is said, “the indignation of the Lord shall be upon *all* nations, and his fury upon *all* their armies:” (verses 2, 5.) “And *all the host of heaven* shall be dissolved, and the *heavens* shall be rolled together as a scroll: and *all their host* (the *stars*) *shall fall down*, as the leaf falleth from off the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree; for *my sword* shall be bathed in heaven,” &c.

Now though these things have been fulfilled, so far as they concern Egypt, Babylon, and Idumea;—yet have we no record that there was any literal darkening of the sun and moon, or falling of the stars, at the dissolution of those kingdoms; whilst, on the contrary, in regard to two of them, we have a plain intimation in the prophecies concerning them, that these terms are to be *figuratively* understood.

We learn also, from expressions which are here and there intermingled with these symbols, what is their *signification*. In the countries where this shaking and this darkening of the heavenly luminaries occur, “their *idols* are to be destroyed,” “their *images* to cease,” and “no more is there to be a *prince*.”*

* Ezek. xxx. 13.

heavens signifies political acts, in the way of revolution or wars, which shake the *ruling powers* of a kingdom;—*The darkening of the sun* is the overthrow of the chief ruler, or the subversion of the throne altogether;—the *darkening of the moon* is the casting down of that form of religion which may be established, whether idolatrous or otherwise;—and *the falling of the stars* is the destruction or degradation of subordinate princes, rulers, nobles, priests, &c. This interpretation of the signs is further confirmed by two other Scriptures;—The first is Isaiah xxiv. 21; “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall *punish* the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth:” (it should be read “*even* the kings of the earth upon the earth,”—for it is a repetition, in other words, or explanation, after the frequent manner of Isaiah, of the sentence going before,—viz. *the host of the high ones that are on high*.) “And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in prison, and after many days shall be visited. Then shall the *moon* be confounded and the *sun* ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his *ancients* gloriously.” Thus the host of the high ones includes the sun and moon; and this *gathering together* of the host, previous to their being

punished, and to the manifestation of the glorious kingdom of Christ, shows, that the prophecy belongs to those last times we have been considering, when the nations shall be gathered in the valley of decision.

The other Scripture is in Haggai ii. in which the expression in verse 21, "I will shake the heavens and the earth,"—is immediately explained thus:—"I will overthrow the *throne of kingdoms* ; I will destroy the strength of the *kingdoms* of the *heathen* ; and I will overthrow the chariots and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother."

But there is another expression in the text, a *terrestrial* sign, which requires explanation, viz. "*the sea and the waves roaring* ;" which indeed would be no sign at all, unless it had a *figurative* meaning ; inasmuch as there never is a tempest, literally, in which the sea and the waves are not agitated and roaring ; which frequent occurrence of this phenomenon destroys its character as a sign. But the expressions, the *sea* and the *waves*, are, like the heavenly bodies we have considered, so constantly occurring in the prophetical Scriptures, intermingled with literal expressions, that they can only be regarded as *tropes*.

Now St. John interprets to us, in the Apoca-

lypse, that *waters* signify “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”* And Jeremiah thus prophecies concerning Babylon—“O thou that dwellest upon many *waters*, abundant in treasures, thine end is come:”† which verse (whilst it forms a clear example of this expression occurring as a figure or trope, in a sentence, in which every other word is to be literally understood) is also explained more precisely in the following verses;—whence we learn that the *waters* are the *nations*, subdued by Babylon, which instead of flowing any longer to her, as tributary streams, would all at once *overflow* and destroy her:—“The *sea is come up* upon Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of the *waves* thereof; her cities are a desolation.”—“The waters shall not flow any more unto Bell.”—“The Lord hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great *voice*: when her *waves do roar* like great *waters*, a noise of their voice is uttered.”‡ These examples evince, that the *sea* and the *waves* signify, prophetically, the *population* of the countries,—the *masses* of the people as distinguished from their *rulers*. And when these floods or waves are said to *roar*, and to *lift up their voice*, or to be agitated, they are in an insubordinate and tumultuous state, threatening

* Rev. xvii. 15.

† Jer. li. 13.

‡ Ibid. verses 43—45.

the stability of the powers, against which they lift up themselves. An example or two from the Psalms will confirm this interpretation.

First, in Psalm xli. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the *mountains* (which are a symbol of *kingdoms* having settled governments) be carried into the midst of the *sea*; (i. e. overturned or swallowed up, by some insurrection of the people;) though the *waters* thereof *roar and be troubled*,—though the *mountains shake* with the swelling thereof." Now in the sixth verse the whole is thus explained: "The *Heathen* (or Gentiles) raged—the *kingdoms were moved* (or *shaken*), HE uttered his voice,—the *earth melted*." So in Psalm lxxv. God is said "to *still the noise of the seas*, the noise of their *waves*, and (i. e. *even*) the tumult of the *people*." Again, in Psalm cxxiv. we have—"If it had not been the *Lord* who was on our side, when *men* rose up against us, then had they swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us;—then the *waters* (the expression, observe, is now changed from *men* to *waters*) then the *waters* had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul;—then the *proud waters* had gone over our soul." Finally, Isaiah says—"The Lord will lift up an ensign to the nations from far"—"and in

that day they shall roar against them, like the roaring of the *sea*; and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.”*

From all these things taken together we may infer,—that at the time, when the prophecy contained in our text shall be fulfilled, there shall be a shaking of all thrones, and of all established governments and churches;—an extinction of their *light*, or power; and a leveling of all titles and authorities; and this through some great political earthquake, or revolution, brought about by the masses of the people: even as in that great earthquake of the Apocalypse, (already noticed,) every island flees away, and the mountains are not found,—and “the *cities* of the nations fall:”†—a *city* being in the Apocalypse the symbol of a Church.

There are some, who do not dispute this *interpretation* of the symbols, who nevertheless refer them, by way of *application*, to the subversion of the Jewish polity, in Church and State, by the Romans. But this is utterly at variance with the context of the prophecy. For, first, Matthew and Mark inform us, that it is *after* the tribulation of those days, that the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And Luke

* Isaiah v. 26, 30.

† Rev. xvi. 18—20.

informs us, that those days of vengeance on the Jews, which began with the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, were to continue, and Jerusalem be trodden under foot, *until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled*. “*After* the tribulation of those days” cannot therefore mean those days themselves, wherein Jerusalem was overthrown: but must be days which shall wind up the present Gentile dispensation, and the period of their oppression of Israel.

The text likewise shows, that these signs are to be the immediate forerunners of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, for the redemption of his people;—of which great events no consistent and rational account can be given, as having occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem.

And, once more, the text informs us, that when these things shall be fulfilled, it shall be a time of “distress of *nations*, with perplexity:” i.e. (as it may be translated) distress of *Gentiles*: whereas the contrary took place at the destruction of Jerusalem:—it was distress of the *Jews*, and triumph of the nations.

For these, and other reasons which might be given, we are compelled to apply these signs to the end of the times of the Gentiles,—those times, which I shall presently show you, are now expiring.

But that shaking of thrones and churches, which I have described as then to take place, implies, that a *democratic* and *infidel* spirit will extensively prevail: for the shaking of the powers of heaven will not so much arise from a conflict of *potentates* for mastery among each other, as from a breaking forth of the wrath of man against the powers that be,—a general casting off of the yoke and cords of Christ,—an insurrection of evil doers against their rulers. It is the *masses*, constituting the physical powers of the nations,—those “*mighty waters*,” which being usually dammed up by political restraints,—or, like the sea, having bounds assigned them of the Almighty, by a perpetual decree, which they cannot pass, though the waves thereof toss themselves and roar,*—shall now have that restraint removed,—and shall overflow and pass over, and like an irresistible torrent sweep down all before it.

I must bring before you one evidence of this, derived from the circumstances of the judgment of that apostate Church which is the Babylon and the Harlot of the Apocalypse, as contained in Rev. xvii.

I am convinced that the said Babylonish Harlot is the *Romish* Church; and that her career has been signally blasphemous and antichristian; yet

* Jer. v. 22.

has it been overlooked by many, that she is ultimately destroyed by *another antichristian power*, more mighty than herself,—even the Beast on which she is seated.

Now this Beast is no other than the political or *popular* strength (if I may so say) of the nations, over which the Harlot has had dominion. For the angel thus invites John to this vision: “Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great Whore, that sitteth upon *many waters* ;”—which waters, on which the woman sitteth, you will remember, are explained to be “*peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.*” Yet when John is taken into the wilderness to see this Harlot, she is represented,—not as sitting upon many *waters*, but as “sitting on a scarlet-coloured *Beast*, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” It is clear, therefore, that the Beast and the waters are the same.

It is, I think, equally clear, that this Beast is no other than the great red Dragon of chap. xii. and the Beast of the sea of chap. xiii.; but under different phases or metamorphoses, produced by the political and religious circumstances of the times, in which they severally reign or act. That they are, in a *certain sense*, the same is evident, first, from their all three being represented as having seven heads and ten horns. But, secondly,

their connexion, or even identity, is shown by a still clearer mark: viz., in that, when the Beast of chap. xiii. is described as rising out of the sea, the *Dragon* is said to give him "*his power, seat, and great authority:*" it is a transfer or abdication in his favour. And whereas this Beast is described as being wounded by the sword, and yet living, so the Beast of chap. xvii., or the *third* Beast, is said to be "*the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is;*"—and also "*the Beast that was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.*" (Ver. 8.)

Mark then now the changes in the aspect of this beast under his different forms. In the first instance there are crowns on his *heads*,—a symbol that the sovereignty was imperial. In the second instance the crowns are removed from the heads to the ten horns; and as horns are a symbol for kingdoms, it shows that the power had become *regal* in those nations. In the third instance, the crown has *disappeared*: but we are informed by the angel "*that there are seven kings, and the beast that was and is not, even he is the EIGHTH:*" showing that the sovereignty is now transferred from the head and the horns to the whole body: it is "*the sovereign people.*"

So, again, the second Beast had upon his *heads* the name of *blasphemy*, "*and a mouth was given*

unto him, speaking great things and *blasphemies* :” showing that the blasphemy evinced itself in the *heads* or rulers of the empire ;—as in the popes, or kings who supported them. But the *Beast*, in his last form, is “*FULL of names of blasphemy* :” showing that this impious disease has now pervaded the *body* politic ; and that the masses open their mouth in blasphemy of every description against God and the King.

This sufficiently confirms the view already taken, that the powers which shall be instrumental in inflicting the judgment of the last days, shall be both republican and *infidel* : were *more* proof wanted of their infidelity, we have it in these two brief facts ;—first, that this beast has his origin, (or last form rather,) from the *bottomless pit* ; and, secondly, that in the end he makes war directly with the Lamb, who is Lord of lords and King of kings.

I now shall proceed to show, that the signs of our own times testify aloud *in all the world*, that these things “*begin to come to pass*.”

The *French Revolution*, commencing in the year 1789, may truly be regarded as the beginning of a new era in the history of Christendom. Those republican and infidel principles, which had been for some time smothering in France, then burst forth with an explosion and a torrent, that amazed

and terrified the world. During the first three years from its outbreak their king was beheaded, and monarchy extinguished;—the Church was plundered,—its ministers butchered,—and at length, in the country which had recently plumed itself as the most catholic, Christianity was altogether abolished by a decree of the National Assembly. The nobles of every rank were stripped of their titles, and degraded to one common level with the multitude;—a tyranny so grinding, so bloody, so ruthless was exercised by the democrats, as to have obtained for their brief career the just epithet of “the reign of *terror* ;”—every man’s hand was against his brother;—social intercourse was entirely suspended;—and the most lawless outrages were committed under the pretext of patriotism and humanity.

The torrent rolled on and passed over into neighbouring kingdoms;—thrones were tumbled into the dust, and principalities were shaken round about; and its effects were felt in the remotest portions of the globe.

A pause has since then taken place; but the political elements are manifestly preparing for another and a fiercer storm. Europe resembles a volcanic mountain, which occasionally sends forth smoke, and voices and thunderings are heard within, and the earth trembles and is feverish

around, and decided shocks are sometimes felt;—thus giving fearful indications, that another and more direful eruption may be expected;—an outburst that will overflow to the extremities of the earth, and produce a *universal* reign of terror,—men's hearts everywhere failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

But I must drop figure, and point you to these indications in more literal terms. In France we had another shock in 1830, producing “the glorious days” (as they are called) of July; since which there have been repeated plots in that country, having for their object the assassination of the king, and the re-establishment of republican principles. In Belgium, in Italy, in Poland, in Switzerland, in Naples, in Spain, and in Portugal, there have likewise been revolutionary movements, produced by democratic principles. We are also assured, by a competent witness, that *the whole body* of the population of Greece is republican in principle;* and by another, that even Egypt is so extensively imbued with the same leaven, owing to the youths sent to be educated in France, that it has become proverbial in the East to say of one, who betrays republican and infidel principles—

* Speech of Major Beauclerk in the Debate on the Greek Loan, July 28, 1836.

“He has been in Egypt.” In the empires of Russia and Austria there are indications of the same spirit giving uneasiness to the rulers, and requiring large standing armies to be maintained for the purpose of overawing it. If we turn to the New World, we find it actually *overrun* with republics; which in Spanish America more especially generate continual factions and repeated changes.

And what shall we say of *Britain*? Alas! the symptoms are too unequivocal of the existence of this same disease among ourselves. Since the re-establishment of the Bourbon dynasty upon the throne of France we have had frequent manifestations of the revolutionary mania; of which the towns of Bristol, Derby, Nottingham, Newport, Birmingham, and Sheffield, have borne unhappy witness; to say nothing of still more recent outbreaks in the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

The newspapers, which are chiefly in request, form a pretty good criterion of the principles which are, for the most part, prevalent in a nation. Two of these, the “Weekly Dispatch” and the “Northern Star,” have alone attained to the enormous circulation of 150,000 weekly. When we consider the number of readers and hearers of a single copy of these papers in the club-rooms

and public-houses of the manufacturing districts, it is not too much to say that more than a million persons are every week made acquainted with the contents of these papers. And what *are* their contents?—The Queen is continually held up to ridicule in them;—the Peers are spoken of as “bloated old fools,” and “natural born idiots;”—the Church and Christianity itself are held up as “*nuisances* that must be got rid of;” and the people are admonished, that if they would but exercise their good sense, there would not exist a *throne* nor a *church* in this country any longer.” These are actual expressions drawn from those publications themselves.*

But even these are exceeded in atrocity by the numerous *unstamped* papers of the day. A high authority has stated, in the House of Lords, that the Attorney-General of the day had shown him a list of 163 different unstamped newspapers, all vying with each other in the most atrocious statements. In them the lawfulness of rebellion is maintained;—all governments and governors are held up as nuisances; and the propriety of assassination and of incendiarism are openly defended.†

* See papers of April 15 and 23, and December, 1838; September 1 and 15, 1839; January 19, 1840.

† Evidence of Lord Brougham before the Committee on the Law of *Libel*.

Some persons think it a sufficient objection to these things being considered as signs of the last times, that there have been seasons of republicanism and blasphemy before, which have not terminated so disastrously as now anticipated; the days of our first Charles being instanced, as a case in point; and the danger of which passed over, so far as the country in general is considered. But there was no responding voice, in those days, in other countries; neither was there any sympathy in the masses of society in general: whereas the great danger now is from the *multitude*. Never were the masses in all lands known to be so generally disaffected toward their rulers;—never were they known to be so *organized*,—to confederate so extensively, and to combine so systematically against their superiors and employers;—never were they known to view with such sullen contempt and anger the ancient institutions of their country, and the national forms of religion in which they have been cradled. In former ages the masses have ever been ready to fight for their religion, however erroneous; now they are aiming to get rid of all religion, however true. A specimen of the *infidel* spirit of these men, and of its daring effrontery, was afforded in this metropolis in 1838, similar to many other instances of the like character which have occurred

in country towns. I allude to the Chartists going in a body to the parish church of Spitalfields, taking possession of the pews, to the exclusion of the rightful owners;—throwing their heads backward at the name of Christ, in mockery of bowing to him;—and then rising up as soon as the text was given out, and quitting the church in a body. So in the year 1834, (when a day was appointed for national fasting and humiliation, on account of the cholera and judgments of the Lord which were then abroad in the land,) the members of the political unions in London openly set it at defiance;—they paraded the streets in bands, locked arm in arm, singing profane songs;—and after harassing the police in various ways, and insulting those who seemed going to or coming from the churches, they adjourned to taverns and public-houses, for the purpose of concluding the day with a debauch.

Nor must it be supposed that these principles are confined to the lower classes. In London and our larger towns avowedly infidel congregations meet every Sabbath-day, which are chiefly attended by the middling classes. I witnessed myself at Newcastle, during the Easter of last year, the walls of the town placarded with bills, announcing that on Easter Sunday, at Joiners' Hall, lectures would be given exposing the fraud and fallacy of

the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, and the doctrine of a General Resurrection and Judgment grounded thereon;—the whole concluding with a phantasmagoria: for admission to all which a price was required, and the clergy were challenged to attend and advocate the opposite side. Placards of a similar character I have frequently observed in Manchester, Edinburgh, and other large towns.

These principles still more extensively,—and I may add, still more *atrociously*,—pervade the respectable classes of society abroad; which may be judged of, first, by the number of infidel works, adapted for educated persons, which find an immediate sale. In Paris alone, during the seven years ending 1824, (as we learn from authentic tables,) upwards of two million volumes of the works of Voltaire and Rousseau were printed: and these are only *two* authors out of many such,—some of a far worse character.* An extract from a French newspaper of last year will afford further proof of the state of things in that country: “*Materialism* (it says)—complete, gross, self-sufficient Materialism,—not deigning to dispute with spirituality, because this antagonist seems too feeble, too mean for its powerful arms,—this is our present state,—this is the moral condition of the country.”†

* “Record” Newspaper, December 24, 1835.

† “L’Esperance,” January 1, 1841.

As to *Germany*, one fact must suffice. A work has recently appeared by H. Heine, a writer of great reputation on the Continent, which, the "Quarterly Review" informs us, has created an *extraordinary sensation* both in France and Germany. This writer states, that they have *outgrown* Deism; and advocates *Pantheism*, or the doctrine that there is no divinity but man, and that all men are gods. He despises *French Materialism*, excepting that which is held by the St. Simonians, (who are the Socialists of the Continent;) and *this* (he says) is better understood and appreciated in Germany than in France; because it is the religion of all their greatest *thinkers* and best artists. Contemplating the growth of these principles, and looking forward to the results, he states, "that these doctrines have developed revolutionary forces, which now only wait the moment to *explode*, and fill the world with terror and admiration." "*Then* (he adds) will be performed a drama, compared to which the French Revolution was but an innocent idyl."

Surely, brethren, we behold in those political signs which I have now set before you, the lineaments clearly developing themselves of the Beast who ascends from the bottomless pit,—who is devoid of the crown,—who wars with the Lamb,—and whose *body* is *full* of names of blasphemy!

· II. I will now call your attention to *natural* signs, not limited to our own country, but, as in the case of *political* signs, made manifest to the world in general.

Almost all interpreters of the prophecy of our Lord, which contains the text, admit, that it has an *aspect* toward the *end of the world*, or of the *Gentile dispensation*, as well as toward the end of the *Mosaical dispensation*; and therefore they consider, that those signs which our Lord gave, as indicating that the *end* was at hand, belong to both periods;—what occurred previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, being but a pattern or type of what is to occur in the last days, and to serve as warnings to that generation. And I may add, that what occurred previous to the former crisis, are but a *faint* type of what is to precede the *latter* crisis; for the frequent occurrence of these signs in our *own* times is very striking, if compared with the period which elapsed between our Lord foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the actual overthrow thereof. Of *earthquakes* there are two shocks recorded, as having been felt at Rome, and one at Apamea in the reign of Claudius; there was one which destroyed several cities of Asia Minor in the year 60, and another of disastrous character in Campania in the year 63. There was also an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the

reign of Titus. There are two instances of *pestilence* recorded; one at Babylon (A.D. 50), the other in Italy (A.D. 66). And there were four periods of *famine*, but *limited* as to geographical extent: the first at Rome; the second in Palestine (which is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xi. 21;) the third in Greece; and the fourth again at Rome.* These, I believe, are all that commentators are able to instance, when showing from historical testimony, that such signs occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem.

In regard then to *earthquakes*, were we to notice all the *shocks* recorded since the French Revolution until now, they would exceed, by more than tenfold, those which I have enumerated: for scarce a year elapses without one or more occurring: our newspapers are this very week filled with the accounts of shocks, which have alarmed the inhabitants of Lancashire and Cheshire. But I must content myself with mentioning those only which have proved *calamitous*. In 1812 an earthquake destroyed the large city of Carraccas in South America, and 20,000 persons were plunged by it into eternity, in the city and in the province of Venezuela. In 1822 an earthquake destroyed

* See Tacitus, Ann. xvi. 13; Phlegon de Mirab., cap. xii.; Josephus, Ant. xx. c. 7; and the general history of that period in Suetonius, Eusebius, Gibbon, and other authors.

Antioch, Aleppo, Latakia, and Scanderoon, with many villages, and several thousand human beings. Another occurred in Syria in 1836, which destroyed 2,395 houses, and 4,000 of the inhabitants. In 1839 a disastrous calamity of the same kind occurred in the island of Martinique. In 1840 Zante was destroyed by earthquake, and a small island adjoining, with all its inhabitants, entirely disappeared. In 1841 a portion of Mount Ararat was dissevered by earthquake, which in falling destroyed several thousand houses with their inhabitants. In the same year the city of Reggio in Calabria was destroyed; and also Cartago, in Central America, with its 10,000 inhabitants. In the last year a serious one occurred at Androusa, in Greece; but the most calamitous of all took place at St. Domingo in the same year; by which the town of Cape Haytien was swallowed up, containing 15,000 persons; and about 60,000 more perished in the districts around. And whilst we are yet delivering these Lectures intelligence is received of another, which has destroyed the town of *Point à Pitre* in the Island of Guadaloupe, with several smaller towns, and some thousands of inhabitants.

In regard to *pestilences*, besides unusual visitations of the *plague*,—which in 1836 destroyed in Bagdad alone 50,000 persons; and in Constan-

tinople raged with unusual violence, especially among the Franks;—the Asiatic *cholera* burst out in 1831, and made the tour of the *world*. Some *millions* of its inhabitants were carried off by it: nearly half a million in the Austrian States alone. For awhile men seemed alarmed at this visitation; and our churches were crowded with anxious listeners; but when the excitement had passed away, the second visit in 1837, though in many parts of the Continent more destructive, was but little heeded.

Another invisible enemy, in the form of *pestilence*, appeared in Europe in 1836 and 1837, which, for want of its character being better known, went in Britain by the common name of *influenza*, and *grippe* on the Continent. The numbers attacked and prostrated by it were never perhaps equalled. At Madrid the Cortes, in France the Chamber of Deputies, were obliged to suspend their sittings, through lack of members. In England the courts of justice were closed, the business of the Bank and Post-office greatly impeded, and numerous churches in town and country shut up from inability to procure ministers; and the like circumstances characterized the visitation in Holland and Germany. The proportion of *deaths* was in the first instance but small; but the constitution was proved so much debilitated, that ordinary

attacks of disease afterwards proved fatal; and some medical practitioners have given it as their opinion, that, in the end, more persons were carried off by this disease, than by the cholera.

We have also had *famine* in divers places. Ireland has been several times visited. In 1837 the greatest distress prevailed in the Highlands of Scotland from the same cause. In France great suffering was endured in the same year from famine; and in Egypt the population of Alexandria and Cairo were described as literally starving. In Switzerland, in the same year, the harvest was destroyed in ten districts by inundations; also in Wallachia, causing famine in those regions. In the West Indies the same effect was produced by *hurricanes*; in the East Indies by unusual *drought*; in which latter country no less than *half a million* of natives perished from starvation. In 1838 the price of flour in some parts of America was from scarcity five shillings the stone; and at Sidney in 1839 sixpence the pound. In the same year at Bermuda and Madras, the crops were so devastated by hurricanes, as to occasion great distress: whilst in the East Indies thousands of the natives were again suffering. And numerous other instances might be given, did time permit, showing that *this* judgment also is going the circuit of the world.

I cannot pass from these *natural* signs, without mentioning another, which, though not named in our Lord's prophecy, is nevertheless most manifestly a *judgment* from him, in the way of warning, whereby he is pleading with an ungodly *world*: I allude to the numerous and remarkable *fires* which have occurred.

I do not mean to lay any emphasis on the mere increase of the number of single houses, on which God has sent burning in the joyous cities;—neither do I purpose to instance such cases as the extensive fires in Liverpool;—nor the conflagrations in our arsenals in 1840;—nor the Paris railroad catastrophe;—nor the burning of a Minster, an Exchange, nor the Houses of Parliament. Within the last seven years, no less than thirty-eight *cities and towns* have been in great part or wholly destroyed by the devouring element! Of these I may instance, in Russia—5,000 houses at Novo Uralsky,—and 1,317 at Khasan (of which 451 were of stone), and many churches. In the Turkish dominions 500 houses in Constantinople, 15,000 houses having previously been destroyed in 1826 in that city, and 6,000 in 1833. Besides these conflagrations, 7,284 houses have been burnt in Smyrna; a great portion of Trebisonde, with ten ships in the harbour; and two-thirds of Salonica. In the Austrian dominions are the town of Steijer,

and 800 houses at Lugos in Hungary. There is the half of Rheinbach in Prussia;—four-fifths of Camenz in Germany;—and upwards of 1,000 houses in the great commercial city of Hamburg. Creully in Normandy, and a town in Andalusia in Spain, have been nearly consumed. In the East are Surat, where 4,000 houses were destroyed; and 900 houses at Sourabaya, in the Island of Java. In America, New York has, during this period, been *six times* a prey to the flames: in the first attack alone 600 buildings were consumed; *altogether* about *double* that number. Mobile has been four times attacked: on the first occasion 500 houses were burned, and the three last fires have almost entirely destroyed it. Charleston, George Town, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, have also greatly suffered. Quibdo, the capital of Choco in New Granada, was entirely consumed in 1839; and the half of St. John's, New Brunswick, together with forty vessels, have likewise been destroyed.

I might add numerous instances of disastrous *inundations*, by which France has more especially suffered;—Portugal, likewise, and its dependency Madeira;—but I must desist: surely these visitations of earthquake, pestilence, famine, and the flame of devouring fire, taken together, and con-

sidering the short space of time in which they have occurred, testify loudly that God is sending forth his warning judgments into the world; and that those signs are fulfilling which are specially to be understood as the precursors of his advent in glory!

III. We have still to consider the *religious* signs of this event. And these must be subdivided: for whilst there are some, which, in a *better* sense, may be called *religious*; there are others, which, whilst *seeming* to be so, are manifestly no more than the work of Satan. I do not allude to avowed infidelity and blasphemy;—for the spirit, of which these things are the fruit, aims so directly at the destruction of all religion, and at the exaltation of *political* principles in its stead, that I have necessarily been obliged to consider it under the first class of signs. They do indeed, in their boastings, lay claim to something *superior* to religion, and assert that *their* principles are to effect that regeneration of mankind, which Christianity has failed to accomplish. Thus the Chartists and Political Unionists boast, that it is to be brought about by universal suffrage, and the dominion of the body and members over the head. The Socialists, to use their own words, boast, “That they will put a final end to extortion and oppression,—feed all the

hungry and clothe all the naked,—and remove all complainings from our streets.”* The infidel Jews of the Continent boast, that they expect no other *Messiah* than the French Revolution; whilst their infidel Gentile neighbours tell us, that the universal triumph of those revolutionary principles will constitute the true *Millennium*.

But our Lord warned us, in the prophecy connected with the text, that before the end of this dispensation we are to have *false Christs* and *false prophets*. For *this* sign is by Matthew, in *his* narrative, distinctly *repeated*, in connexion with those signs which are immediately to precede the advent; and the apostles Peter, Jude, and John, expressly teach, that there shall be *false prophets*; and moreover so *describe* these false prophets, that we may clearly behold them in the present times. For surely we have multitudes, who “despise government” or dominion, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.†

In the Socialists, and more numerous St. Simonians, we see “*scoffers*, walking after their own lusts;”—“filthy dreamers who defile the flesh;”—“forbidding to marry,”—“having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.”‡ And both in these, and in the Deists, Unitarians,

* “Northern Star,” August 11, 1833.

† 2 Pet. ii. 10; Jude v. 8.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 14.

Arians, Socinians, and Neologists of our times, we have those false *teachers*, “who privily bring in damnable heresies,” “denying the Lord that bought them, the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” *

If (as St. John declares) he is Antichrist, who denieth the Father and the Son, surely “*now* there are *many* antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.” † Jude also calls these false teachers (or false *prophets*—for they are the same) “*murmurers* and complainers,” ‡ persons, i. e. who are ever hunting for *grievances*; and compares them to “*raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame* ;” thus identifying them with “*the sea and the waves roaring*.”

Then we have the more *fanatical* classes of false prophets, which abound in our time; among whom also are some who may justly be deemed false *Christs*. The followers of Joanna Southcote are well known, who are numerous in some parts, and declare that the Shiloh actually was born of Joanna, but that he was caught away, and carried into the *wilderness*, where he remains until the time for his manifestation; as if they had desired to fulfil this prophecy of our Lord, who warns us that some will say of his coming, “Behold, he is in the *desert*.”

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

† 1 John ii. 18.

‡ Jude 16.

A man called Thoms, *alias* Sir William Courtenay, a few years since pretended that *he* was the Christ, showing wounds in his hands and bosom to his followers, many of whom (it will be in your recollection) perished in an affray with the military. I might bring forward several other circumstances, did time permit, of impostors of this kind; especially on the Continent, some account of whom is given in a German work on the Signs of the Times, attributed to Professor Tholuck, of Berlin. One most extravagant sect, however, which has recently sprung up in America, under the guidance of a false prophet, I cannot pass over—I mean the *Mormonites*. Their leader, who is an ignorant and vulgar profligate, has been once or twice exposed and disconcerted; but without its opening the eyes of his still more fanatical and besotted followers. Not to enter into a regular history of this sect, let it suffice, that, from the testimony of those who have visited their settlement, they combine the grossest fanaticism with the commission of every species of immorality;—that they discard God's Word, and prefer the pretended visions and revelations of their leader;—that they number already one hundred thousand adherents, the larger proportion of whom are natives of *Britain*—of *religious* and *intelligent Britain*!—that they think it lawful to propagate their faith and to punish

opposers by force of arms, when the opportunity shall permit;—and they have already raised a military legion, which twelve months ago consisted of 1,700 fighting men. These things create no small uneasiness among some in that country, who regard them as rising up like the Mahomedan fanatics of a former age, to punish a corrupt, a divided, and a worldly Church.*

Nor can I pass by this part of my subject, without noticing *another* heresy, which, as an ecclesiastical system, and in doctrine, is, *pre-eminently* THE *false prophet* of Scripture: I mean *Popery*. I have already drawn your attention to the fact, that it is described in Rev. xvii., as the Harlot seated on the Infidel Beast;—and as that *Great City*, on many waters, mystically called *Great Babylon*. But I would particularly call your attention to this circumstance,—that when the Spirit of God shows unto John the *Judgment* of the Whore, as described in chapters xvii. and xviii., he selects the moment, in the opening of the vision, when she is seated in gorgeous array of purple and gold *upon* the beast; and is represented as “saying, in her *heart*, I sit a *Queen*, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”† From which I infer,—that though she shall have been *threatened*

* “Three Days at Nauvoo.” By the Rev. H. Caswell, M.A.

† Rev. xvii. 3 ; xviii. 7.

with widowhood and with sorrow, yet that she shall be apparently prospering and extending or recovering power, just at the moment when judgment shall fall upon her:—for “*Therefore,*” it is written, “shall her plagues come in one day”—i. e. suddenly and unexpectedly. She shall not only, up to the last, make the nations on which she sits drunk with the wine of her fornication; but she shall become intoxicated with it herself, and under a judicial infatuation shall be crying “Peace and safety,” when sudden destruction cometh upon her.

How remarkable was the type of *this* also during the progress of the French Revolution! In the year 1790 the National Assembly declared “that their attachment to the Catholic Apostolic, and Roman worship could not be doubted;” and in 1792 not only was that corrupt form of worship dashed down with violence, like a millstone cast into the sea; but Christianity itself was abolished, and miscalled *Reason* worshipped in its stead.* And now behold, brethren, in the signs of our own times, how much safer it is to walk by the light of the sure word of Prophecy, however present appearances may seem to contradict, than to follow the spurious glimmer of man’s false philosophy,

* Fysh’s “History of the French Revolution,” pp. 91, 203.

even though appearances may be in its favour. Those who looked only at Prophecy, even when Popery was humbled, declared that she would rise again, and obtain some considerable measure of power and ascendancy once more: those, on the contrary, who followed the sparks of their own kindling, ridiculed the idea that such a superstition should ever revive or acquire influence, in an age of surpassing learning, science, and knowledge, like this boasted nineteenth century;—and insisted, that she must needs wane and decline before its glorious light. But which opinion has proved itself the correct one? Alas, great indeed appears to be the renovation of Popery now going forward! Within the last five-and-twenty years she has covered this island with new chapels;—she is sending out her missionaries, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, into all lands, and successfully establishing her worship in various places;—and O, (tell it not in Gath,) the unclean spirit which has now gone forth from out of the mouth of the False Prophet, has raised up, even in the bosom of a Protestant University, a band of degenerate children of our own Church, who are doing all they can, covertly and openly, to subvert Evangelical truth, and to reconcile men's minds to the abominations of the Harlot! Yea, and some, even

ministers of the Establishment, have committed adultery with her, and are “teaching and seducing Christ’s servants to commit fornication with her!”

I need not tell you, that this pestilential heresy is daily spreading, and becoming more daring in the prospect of success. But—it will be the triumph only of a moment! Her own corrupt system has hatched those infidel cockatrice eggs, that will in the end ruin her. “They shall rise up suddenly that shall bite her:”—the very beast on which she sits, and who now fawns when she caresses, shall “turn again and rend her;”—and her fancied glory, when apparently just within her grasp, shall vanish as the night vision!—“It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty:”—“for the fruits that her soul lusted after shall be departed from her, and all things which were goodly and dainty are departed from her, and she shall find them no more at all! And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning;—*standing afar off, for fear of her torment*, saying—Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for *in one hour* is thy judgment come.” *

* Rev. xviii. 9, 10, 14.

Under the head of false religion, I must finally notice that *general corruption of morals*, and the *spirit of apostasy*, which is now everywhere to be observed, and is daily increasing. This is clearly marked by St. Paul as one of the signs of the last days;—even as it has invariably preceded every great crisis of judgment. In the days of Noah, it was the precursor of the flood;—it was the mark that the people of Sodom, and that the Amorites were filling up the measure of their iniquity;—and it indicated the approach of judgments on Israel prior to the captivity to Babylon, and also previous to their last great dispersion. But Paul teaches Timothy expressly—“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”*

Now, though the apostle points out to Timothy, that there were already some “of this *sort*” discernible in his times, (as indeed there are in all times,) yet he only draws his attention to these as

* 2 Tim. iii. 1—6.

specimens ; as is evident from the context. For he says that these perilous times *shall* come : not that they had then arrived, which they would have been had these characteristics been generally prevalent. They were indeed visible among the Jews, and pervading the whole mass of society in Palestine : but then Timothy had nothing to do with the circumcision : he was exercising his ministry among Gentiles ; and the apostle therefore must evidently be speaking, in the main, of the signs which will mark the end of the Gentile dispensation.

It is not practicable for me, within my present limits, to touch upon all the characteristics here mentioned by the apostle, and to show that they have now broken out like a copious rash upon the whole face of society—indicating the malignant and incurable disease which lurks beneath its surface. One single particular I will briefly notice, because it is that into which the Apostle chiefly resolves the whole—viz., “ the having the *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof.” This is indeed a remarkable characteristic, that men who are “ *blasphemers, despisers of those that are good, unholy, traitors, heady, highminded,*”—should nevertheless affect the *form* of godliness ! Yet so it is ; and that in a manner quite unprecedented. Let me remind you of a few instances : At a great Meeting of the Political Union held at Birming-

ham in 1838, the Chairman opened the proceedings with *prayer*. All took off their hats, including many who were avowed Atheists or Infidels. The Chairman then asserted the sovereignty of the masses, and declared, "that God had given us all blessings, *government* had given us none;"—thus, in the very hour of making his prayer "*despising government*," and "speaking evil of dignities,"—both of them marks of the last day scoffers.

The operatives of Oldham, having destroyed a factory in a riot, in consequence of which two of their party were apprehended, met to the number of 30,000 to deliberate. The Meeting concluded by singing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow;" and separated with the determination not to resume work, until their two companions were liberated. A Meeting held at Boardman Edge, for the same purpose, was addressed by a Methodist local preacher, and was commenced and concluded with psalm-singing. During the Chartist tumults of last year, the mob from Todmorden entered Halifax in procession, having two or three hundred females in the van, walking three abreast, with a man on each side, and singing the Hundredth Psalm.

Many Dissenting chapels are nothing more than nurseries of rebellion and treason under the pretence of godliness. Sermons, preached on the

Sabbath-day, have been made the vehicle for producing daggers, pistols and ammunition, and exhorting the hearers to arm. In Scotland the Chartists have numerous chapels, at which the *form* of Divine worship is preserved, and they baptize children and dispense what *they* call a sacrament. But the discourses are nothing more than tirades against kings and rulers, and the usual seditious outcry against governments.

Passing from these, it is well known that the Popish priests of Ireland make furious political speeches, and denounce their political opponents from the *altar*, as they call the communion table. And though such things are not yet done by that Popish school, which has risen up in our own Establishment, because the laws of the Church prevent it; yet the most prominent feature of that system is the multiplication of the *forms* of religion and a denial of the spirit and *power* thereof. The form of baptism is scrupulously attended to, and great emphasis is laid thereon; but the need of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, if baptism hath been administered, is denied. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is greatly exalted, whilst the doctrine of justification by faith, of which we are reminded therein, is discouraged or disowned. And many pharisaical mummeries are now encouraged, whilst the power of Divine grace is ridiculed.

But all this is only a more full-blown development of the spirit of the multitude;—the more decent of whom have been externally *devout* in their attention to ordinances;—the more thoughtless of whom have grossly desecrated those ordinances, trampling on the pearls of baptism and confirmation, whilst both parties have been ready to scoff at the *power* of godliness, as the raving of enthusiasts or fanatics.

But, blessed be God! there are a few bright and refreshing signs abroad in the world of the approaching advent of Christ, with the brief mention of two of which, I will now bring this long discourse to a conclusion.

Among the signs which, in the prophecy of our Lord, are immediately to precede *the end*, is the preaching of the Gospel in all nations;—not (as some have erroneously concluded) for the *conversion* of the world, but as a witness, or testimony unto them,—as our Lord himself declares. Indeed, wheresoever the conversion of the world is mentioned in Scripture, it will be found, from the context, that it follows that great *crisis of judgment*, we have noticed, and the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That there will be a preaching of the Gospel in the world, equal in extent to that which preceded the end of the Mosaical dispensation;—and that it

will be terminated by a great crisis of *judgment*;—is made very clear by the vision described by St. John in Rev. xiv. He beholds an angel fly in the midst of heaven, “having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to *every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*; saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his *judgment* is come.” And another angel follows, saying, “*Babylon* is fallen, is fallen,” &c. From which, I repeat, it is clear that when we shall see a great Missionary or Evangelical agency, going through the world, to make known the Gospel to the nations, we are to understand it as a *sign*.—It is, as it were, God proclaiming to us, with a *loud voice*—that *judgment* is at hand;—especially judgment on the harlot Church, which is *Babylon*.

And from the same period from which we date the outbreak of Antichristian principles, viz., the French Revolution, may be likewise dated the commencement of those gigantic *religious* efforts which are now witnessed in the world; so that “when the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him.”* Since then the Scriptures have been printed in upwards of 200 different languages and dialects of the “nations, tongues and peoples;” and about

* Isaiah lix. 19.

twenty million copies of the whole or portions have been poured into the world. Since then numerous Missionary Societies have sent forth their heralds to the four winds ;—schools for the instruction of old and young in the truths of religion, have been opened in all directions ; (the system of Sabbath schools, infant schools, and adult schools, being peculiar to this age ;)—and every year beholds new Societies, having some religious object, start into existence.

Some are perplexed, how to reconcile these things, and the apparent increase also of persons of serious piety, with the fact that the *world*, or great masses of society, are waxing more irreligious and blasphemous. But the existence of both these signs together is a far more conclusive token of the Judgment and the Advent being at hand, than if religion only were on the increase : for it is God's manner thus to call out his *Election* before he strikes. Thus, in the time of Hezekiah and Josiah, the last of the pious kings of Judah, previous to the captivity to Babylon, there were extensive revivals of religion ; but for all this the Lord's anger was not turned away, but his arm was stretched out still. And in the latter end of the Jewish polity, our Lord Jesus himself appeared, by means of whose disciples, after his return to the Father, thousands were truly converted unto God,

and “a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith:” yet the apostle declares, as regards the nation at large, that they were left “to fill up their sins alway: because the wrath was come upon them to the uttermost.”*

The other sign I would notice is, the great and increasing interest in behalf of *Israel* which is now awakened, both among political and religious persons:—all which looks toward their speedy restoration to their own land. The subject is too large for me to attempt to do it justice, within the limits of this present discourse:—I must content myself with two brief remarks concerning them. The first is, that after ages of oppression, which the Jews have experienced from all among whom they have been led captive, the powers of Europe began, at the era of the French Revolution, to relax in the severity of their measures against them; and whilst some of the states of the Continent have admitted them to equal civil rights and privileges with their other subjects, almost *all* have passed laws ameliorating their political condition. At this time an eminent and wealthy Jew, who has distinguished himself by a mission which he undertook, in behalf of his oppressed countrymen in Syria, is invited by the Russian

* 1 Thess. ii. 16.

ministry to repair to St. Petersburg, for the purpose of assisting in the consultations of the government in behalf of the two millions and a-half of Jews in the dominions of the Emperor.*

And as some thus speak comfortably to Jerusalem in *political* matters, others are anxious to address to her sons the far greater consolations of the Gospel; and to comfort them with those prophecies, which speak of their restoration and glory under Messiah. They would knock off those fetters which *our* tyranny hath forged;—they would bind up those wounds which *our* bigotry hath inflicted;—they would wipe away that sweat and those tears, which *our* oppression hath wrung from them; and raise up the drooping heads, which *we*, alas! have bowed down. Already kings are to be found who are nursing fathers to them, and queens who are as nursing mothers to them; and a great and increasing interest is taken by Christians in general concerning *all* which relates to the Jew,—to Zion,—to Palestine.

And what is this, but a sign that their tribulation, now of nearly 1800 years, is just running out;—that the warfare of Jerusalem is all but accomplished? For it is written, in Psalm cii., “Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion:

* “Voice of Jacob,” a Jewish newspaper, No. 39.

for the time to favour her, yea, *the set time*, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.”*

And now, dear brethren, suffer in conclusion, the word of exhortation.

I have brought before you what I trust will be considered *striking signs*; and they are signs not done in a corner; but such as evince that God is sounding the alarm in *all* his holy mountain, and lifting up his tokens to the world. Yet remember, that these things are only “the *beginning* of sorrows:” “evil men and seducers will yet wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” and will bring on a day of far deeper gloominess and darkness, than any that has yet been witnessed. Be not deceived then by temporary pauses in the howling of the winds, and muttering of the thunder;—nor by gleams of seeming sunshine for the Church or world. Such things have always taken place in times of crisis, as if to lull the hypocrite and unbeliever into more fatal security. If Judah’s lion be stirred up, though he seem to lie down

* I must here refer the Reader, who desires to see these signs more at large, together with other signs, and the references and authorities more particularly given, to my work published under the title of “*Abdiel’s Essays* on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ,” &c.

again, yet is he only *couching*, and preparing to spring suddenly upon the prey. Be you then upon the watch, "that ye be not caught away with the error of the wicked;" for these are times when all *institutions*, political and religious, are being shaken,—and all *principles of individuals* are being sifted, that the wheat may be separated from the tares.

God is making manifest in various ways the hollowness of much even of that *Evangelical* profession, which has been made, both within and without the pale of the Established Church. Whilst the poor are tried by political demagogues and religious fanatics;—the more respectable classes have on the one hand a spurious *liberalism* before them, which would confound and destroy those things which God hath distinguished: and on the other hand they have a specious *pharisaism*, which affects more of strictness and order and sobriety; but which in reality takes away what is heavenly and spiritual and powerful, and substitutes what is external, ceremonial, and dead! "Take therefore unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be enabled to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand:"—the girdle of *truth*,—the breastplate of *righteousness*;—the shield of *faith*;—the sword of the *Spirit*, which is the Word of God;—having the feet shod

with the preparation of the Gospel of *peace*—the blessed assurance of justification by faith without the works of the law; and having for a helmet the cheering *hope* of that *salvation*, which is ready to be revealed in the last time. Yes—the cheering and brightening *hope of salvation*: for though I distinguished only some few signs, as in themselves cheering, yet, when considered as the tokens of our Lord's approach, *all* are cheering: therefore he bids us, as in the text, “when we shall see these things only *begin* to come to pass, to lift up our heads, because our *redemption* draweth nigh.” And if the *beginnings* of these things are calculated to inspire us with hope and joy, how much more their *fulness*! Yes, those things which are dark and appalling to the world,—like the pillar and the cloud,—will be as light and brightness to the saints; who, when all is roaring and raging and upheaving round about them, shall be ardently waiting for, but most surely expecting, and in the midst of it obtaining, *deliverance* from corruption, into the glorious—glorious liberty of the children of God.

LECTURE VII.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

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REV. XX. 6.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

THE hope of the resurrection, even when embraced in its most general form, is a mighty triumph of faith over sight, and of the testimony of God over the senses and experience of man. Death, for six thousand years, has been the law of the natural universe. No wisdom of man could possibly assign a limit to its fearful dominion. He might, perhaps, by his own powers, attain a conviction that the soul is immortal: but that corruption and the

worm should yield up their spoil, and myriads of immortal bodies, after ages of decay, should rise from the dust to rejoin the separated spirit, is a truth which far surpasses the range of his unaided reason. And thus, from the first days of the Gospel until now, the natural man receiveth it not: the Athenian philosopher, and the debased African savage, alike reject the doctrine with mockery and scorn.

Human science, indeed, amidst all its wonderful discoveries, has brought us no tidings of this victory over the grave. It has explored the immensity of the heavens; but those starry spaces have disclosed to us no sounds of life, much less of a resurrection, and reveal none of their secrets but a vast and cheerless solitude. It has searched the depths of the earth for the relics of former ages; but has found in them only the sepulchre of buried worlds, the trophies of death, and the memorials of destruction. He only, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, could pierce through this dark veil, and bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel. He alone could proclaim that message of hope to perishing sinners: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;

and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

But the first resurrection offers a still severer trial to the faith of the Christian. We cannot here appeal to innumerable texts where it is plainly revealed: we cannot point to creeds, in which the Church from the beginning has with one voice borne witness to its truth. On this doctrine pious Christians have been, and are now, divided in their judgment. It is true that it was generally believed in the first ages of the Church; and novelty, at least, cannot be laid to its charge: but their authority seems more than balanced by the general disbelief of it in later times. The analogy of Scripture, however decisive in its favour, appears at first sight obscure and ambiguous. In maintaining this doctrine, therefore, we have to rest only upon the Word of God, and chiefly on this one prophecy. Human authority stands aloof from the inquiry, and to the law and the testimony is our only possible appeal.

But besides these hindrances to the reception of the doctrine, there is another, not less powerful, of a different kind. Truth, in its details, makes a far greater demand on our faith than when presented in a general form. The resurrection, as an abstract theory, may have a deep interest even for

worldly men. Philosophers may love to speculate on its hidden laws ; while others, of a more imaginative temper, may be allured by its beauty. It may awaken in them a strange sense of awe and mystery, and exercise over them the fascination of some wild and fairy dream. But the doctrine of the first resurrection strips away from the whole subject this unreal character. It is no longer a lifeless theory, a plaything of the fancy : it stands out in bold relief as an historical fact, linked in with the chain of actual events, and with the whole course of Divine providence. It now becomes a solemn reality of eternal interest, which strikes on the unawakened conscience with intolerable power. And thus thousands, who repeat continually those words of the creed, almost without a thought,—“I believe in the resurrection of the body,”—would start, perhaps, at the bare mention of the first resurrection as at some apparition from the dead.

Why, then, should a doctrine, in appearance so disputable, and beset with such difficulties, be now pressed on the attention of the Church? The answer is very plain. Grant for one moment that the doctrine is true, and you must feel, my Christian brethren, that it is one of deep interest to ourselves. Its importance must be increasing every day, as the time draws nearer and nearer ; and the difficulties and prejudices which surround

it are so many reasons why it should be clearly explained, and applied in its Divine power to the heart of every Christian.

The present state of the world has convinced thoughtful observers that great changes are near at hand. Wars, almost unrivalled in vastness among civilized nations, have been followed by a deep pause; as if some secret and invisible spell had been thrown over the angry passions of mankind. Society, after those convulsive struggles, has returned to a feverish and restless calm. Meanwhile, all events have worn the character of intense and earnest preparation. The inventions of science have crushed the world into half its space, and opened a rapid intercourse between the most distant countries. That power, which for ages was the scourge and terror of Christendom, has withered and wasted, till a breath seems enough to complete its ruin, and to set free the land of promise for its ancient occupiers. The Gospel has been preached, more widely than ever, among all nations. To make this remarkable sign of Providence more striking and impressive to the most careless minds, it has even joined the remotest islands of the ocean, as a fresh province, to our own empire. The Jews, long neglected or oppressed, are attracting the notice even of mere politicians, and the Holy Land, with its border

countries, is becoming once more the thoroughfare and the battle-field of nations.

At such a season, when all men are looking forward in hope or in fear, surely the Christian is bound to search the Word of God, that he may discern the signs of the times. It is only by a knowledge of those things which are coming upon the earth, that our own hopes can be guided into the path of the Divine counsels. Now in the forefront of those prospects, which the Word of God discloses to the Church, stands the promise of the first resurrection; and this lays us under a plain obligation to ascertain, simply and prayerfully, its true meaning. How grievous will be the folly and sin of a careless ignorance, if the time is indeed near when all the people of Christ shall enter into their inheritance, and, like Daniel, stand in their lot at the end of the days! Do we desire to be found ourselves, however unworthy, among that holy company? Then at least let us search the Scriptures, like the noble Bereans, whether these things are so; and laying aside all prejudice, receive meekly and in reverence the testimony of God's holy Word.

Let me entreat, then, your serious and patient attention, while I endeavour from these words, first, to prove the reality of the first resurrection as a literal fact; secondly, to remove the most

common objections to its truth; and, lastly, to unfold its practical power, in some of those great lessons which it should fix deeply in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to reveal things to come, raise us at this holy season to some lively apprehension of this blessed hope, that through the cross and the passion of our Lord, we may ourselves be brought to the glory of his resurrection!

I. The eternal contrast between faith and unbelief, the righteous and the wicked, meets us in every part of the Word of God. This is the great truth, which all corruptions of the Gospel strive, in one way or other, to obscure, that they may cheat the soul with some refuge of lies. But nowhere does it shine with a clearer light than in these prophecies of the resurrection. Three distinct forms of expression are used to impress it on our conscience. There is a resurrection of the just, and of the unjust; a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of damnation: some shall rise to everlasting life, and others shall rise only to shame and everlasting contempt.

The interval of time between these events, as it was less needful for us to know, is revealed more sparingly, and in fewer passages. There are, indeed, several intimations that such an interval does exist; but its length is revealed in this

chapter only. It is here taught us, in the plainest terms, that a thousand years will intervene between the resurrection of the saints and the final act of Divine judgment.

That this doctrine is nowhere else stated so plainly, is no real presumption against its truth. The resurrection itself, for a long time, was very dimly revealed. Till our Lord had appeared in the flesh, and confirmed the truth in his own person, the Holy Spirit seems to have withheld a full disclosure of the great mystery. The vision, like that on the mount, was not to be unfolded till the Son of man was risen from the dead; and even then, the moral features of the judgment, and the awful contrast of reward and punishment, were far more important to the Church than details of manner or of time. It was enough that one clear statement should be given, before the inspired Volume was closed, which might serve for a key to all the other prophecies, and brighten into fuller and fuller evidence when the time of the fulfilment should be drawing near.

Now such is the exact character of this important text. Its own language is clear, full, and unambiguous. The truth which it reveals unites and reconciles many prophecies which must otherwise be explained away, or left in hopeless

contradiction. It is founded on the earliest of all the types in the Word of God; it blends into harmony the promises of the Old and of the New Testament, which else would seem to be at variance; and, in short, it forms a sacred key-stone in the glorious arch of Divine providence.

But since the literal meaning of these verses has often been set aside with contempt, as a gross and carnal fancy, let us examine the words more narrowly, and consider some of those arguments which fix its true signification.

1. First of all, **THE PREVIOUS EVENTS**, described in the former chapter, prove that a real and personal resurrection is the true object of the vision.

From the first opening of the Apocalypse, one great event is set before the eye of the Church,—the Second Coming of our Lord. This truth stands foremost in the prophecy,—“Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” It is repeated by our Lord himself, in nearly all the seven epistles, as the motive to watchfulness and holy obedience. Towards the close of the book, under the sixth vial, the warning is repeated once more: “Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that waketh and keepeth his garments.” The whole current of the prophecy seems to converge on this great event. After its visions are

complete, the Spirit and the bride echo the voice of invitation; and the Saviour himself renews the message: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus."

Now where, in the course of the visions, is this advent described, since it is quite incredible that it should be passed over in silence? The question admits only of one answer. In the nineteenth chapter, and there only, we have a full description of this great event. Heaven is opened, and the mighty conqueror appears. His name is called the Word of God. The heavenly armies are seen attending Him in his descent from the skies. He wears on his brow the diadems of earthly dominion, so long usurped by the dragon, but which are now reclaimed by Him whose right they are. He rules the nations with a rod of iron, and all enemies are subdued before Him. On his vesture and his thigh He wears that incommunicable name, the token of his supreme dominion, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

In this sublime description every main feature of the second advent is prominently combined. The following chapters, on the other hand, have not one word which can properly denote the coming of the Lord from heaven. Let us only compare the silence of the one passage with the full descrip-

tion in the other, and it will be plain that the vision before our text is the true place, in this prophecy, of the second advent.

Now, throughout all Scripture, the coming of the Lord is joined, in the closest manner, with the real resurrection of his people. The statement of our text, in its literal sense, is thus in full harmony with the uniform voice of revelation. When the Lord has executed judgments on his enemies, the happiness of his servants is announced in the gracious promise, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

To deny that a literal prediction is here given, is therefore to distort the words of a plain text, in order to force them into discordance with every other part of Scripture. A resurrection, all Christians must allow, attends without an interval the coming of the Lord: but if the passage before us were a mere figure, a thousand years must elapse after the Advent, before the people of Christ are raised from the dead and enter on their glorious inheritance.

The only escape from this argument is, to make the Advent in the previous chapter a mere figure also, and to suppose a real Advent in some later part, where the prophecy is totally silent concerning such an event. But what an unwarrantable license is here! Are we then at liberty to explain

away the strongest terms which can describe a personal Advent, the opening of heaven, the descent to earth, the company of attendant saints, the crowns of dominion, and the incommunicable name, and to turn the Lord of glory himself into a symbol and a figure? And not content with this, shall we also interpolate boldly a descent of Christ from heaven with all his saints, where the prophecy maintains an unbroken silence? What is this but to bring ourselves, by one error, to the brink of a double curse, the curse on those who add, and on those who take away from the words of this prophecy? Contrast only the silence at the close of the twentieth chapter on this subject with the sublime description of the marriage supper of the Lamb; and surely every candid mind must see that this first argument rests on a sure basis, which can never be overthrown.

The first resurrection, it thus appears, does not precede, but attends or follows the personal Advent of the Saviour. And hence to turn it into a metaphor not only strains the words from their natural meaning, but contradicts the uniform testimony of God's word, which always connects a real resurrection with the day of the Lord's appearing.

2. THE SUBJECTS OF THIS RESURRECTION form a second proof of its literal character. "I saw

thrones, and they sat on them; and judgment was given unto them."

Who are these whom the prophet now beholds on the seats of judgment? The context supplies us with an answer. St. John, in the former chapter, has already heard the loud voices in heaven, saying, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." "And to her it was given that she should be arrayed in fine linen, white and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." The angel addresses to him the further charge—"Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Heaven is then opened. The Word of God appears in all his Divine majesty. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." The enemies of the Lord are overthrown, and Satan, the old serpent, is bound in the bottomless pit. Then the prophet resumes with these words—"I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them, . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ." Who can be meant but the heavenly armies who were already present in the vision, the followers of the Lamb, called, and chosen, and faithful? These are the mystic bride, the Lamb's wife. These are the honoured guests who are called to the marriage supper. Their life, which had been hid with Christ in God, is now

openly manifested in the sight of the world. The song which they uttered long before is now fulfilled—"Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." And since it is from heaven that they come to reign, the words must clearly denote a real, and not a figurative resurrection.

The persons, then, who appear in vision on the thrones of judgment, are the same with the armies clad in fine linen, who have followed the Lamb. But may not these be a mere symbol to denote other servants of God who shall at that time be honourable and blessed upon earth? This seems to be the view of nearly all who advocate a figurative resurrection. So the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel were a figure of the house of Israel, and their resurrection an emblem of Israel's restoration. So the apostle declares, that the receiving of Israel shall be as life from the dead. The resurrection of the two witnesses in the Apocalypse is thought to confirm this view, since it is generally applied by modern interpreters to some political revival of the Church of God.

These reasons, however, entirely fail on a close examination. The nature of symbols is to express real objects by ideal forms, or those which are higher and more spiritual by real objects of an inferior kind. The valley of dry bones was no

actual reality; it was an imaginary object before the eye of the prophet. The words of St. Paul in the eleventh of Romans, if turned into a vision, would be of the same kind: the resurrection of some *unreal* corpse would symbolize the restoration of Israel.

The same truth appears just as plainly in the prophecy of the two witnesses. All who believe them to be literal persons maintain also their literal resurrection. On the other hand, all who regard their resurrection as figurative believe the witnesses themselves to be no real persons, but a figure or emblem, like the seven candlesticks in the opening vision.

The parallel, then, in each instance, entirely fails. In the prophecy of our text, the armies of heaven, the martyrs of Christ, are living and real persons. If the resurrection were figurative, persons would be symbolized by other persons equally real with themselves, and even superior in dignity. Now this violates the nature and use of a symbol, and involves us in hopeless confusion. That saints descending from heaven should denote other holy men, born and sojourning on earth, is a fiction without any warrant. Those heavenly armies are not, and from their nature, cannot be mere symbols; they are among the highest realities of the Word of God. And since it is these armies

who sit on the thrones, and are partakers of the first resurrection, the proof is clear and firm, that a bodily resurrection is the true object of the vision.

3. THE OFFICE ASSIGNED TO THESE RISEN SAINTS is again a third argument for the literal meaning. "They sat on thrones, and judgment was given to them."

These words have a clear and definite sense. They are no vague description of peace and prosperity in the Church or the world. They are terms of royalty and dominion. The truth implied both in the emblem of *thrones* and the literal phrase of *judgment* is one and the same. The prophecy exhibits to us a dispensation of righteous government; and its features are those of judicial power and kingly exaltation.

The event thus announced agrees with many other promises given to the servants of Christ. Our Lord himself declared to his apostles—"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me . . . that ye may sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." A similar statement occurs in Isaiah, at the overthrow of the last oppressor of the Church—"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." (Is. xxxii. 1.) Our Lord repeats the promise in this very book, and extends it to the whole Church in that gracious declaration—

“ To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.”

Compare these and similar promises with the words of this vision, and there will be found the most complete harmony. They all describe a Royal dominion to be given to the people of Christ. The words of St. John seem to be an echo of those uttered by our Lord at the last supper, when this beloved disciple was actually leaning on his breast. And therefore since the twelve apostles are among the objects of the vision, and of the number who sit on thrones of judgment, the event can be no mere figure, but must be a true and literal resurrection.

4. THE MENTION OF THE SOULS OF THE MARTYRS is a further confirmation of the same truth. No single expression has been so frequently alleged in disproof of the literal exposition; yet none perhaps, when closely examined, yields a stronger testimony in its favour.

The common objection is of this kind. St. John describes a resurrection of the *souls* of the martyrs. But this phrase cannot naturally denote a resurrection of *bodies*. It seems rather to imply a spiritual resurrection, by which the martyrs shall figuratively re-appear in successors animated with the same spirit of faith and holiness.

Now, in this argument there are two fatal defects.

The apostle does *not* affirm a *resurrection* of souls; nor does the word *soul* admit of such a vicarious or figurative meaning.

Three terms are used in Scripture to describe the mysterious nature of man. They are all seen combined in that beautiful prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus."

Wherever in the word of God federal or collective acts are to be described, the word *spirit* is employed for that purpose. Is the union of the believer with Christ to be unfolded? "He that is joined to the Lord is one *spirit*." Has the Baptist to fulfil the same office with Elijah, and to represent his person, just as the millennial saints have been supposed to replace the martyrs? "He shall go before the Lord," it is said, "in the *spirit* and power of Elias." Is the unity of the spiritual life to be described with its blessed fruits in all true Christians? The word appears again in that statement—"The minding of the *spirit* is life and peace." Or if the same unity is exhibited between two individuals only, as Paul and Titus, we have still the same expression—"Walked we not in the same spirit?" So again, to express the union of the whole Church, the same term is twice employed. "There is one body and one *spirit*, even as ye were

called in one hope of your calling." "Ye are all baptized into one body, and have all been made to drink of one spirit."

On the other hand, the word *soul* is used, with equal uniformity, to denote what is strictly personal, and not capable of a vicarious transfer. Where personal guilt or faithfulness, reward or punishment, or moral accountableness, are described, or even individual number only, this is the term which the Holy Spirit employs. "He that findeth his life (or *soul*) shall lose it; and he that loseth his *life* for my sake shall find it." "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." "Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil." "He which converted a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death."

In the same strictly personal sense, we read, that "three thousand souls were added to the Church;" and that in the ark, "few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." With these various texts of the New Testament we may compare the words of Ezekiel, in a passage where the doctrine of personal accountableness is stated perhaps more fully than in any other part of Scripture, "All souls are

mine; as the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. xviii. 4.)

These facts throw a steady light on the true meaning of this prophecy. St. John tells us, that the *souls* of the martyrs lived and reigned with Christ. That one word, when compared with other Scriptures, turns our thoughts away from all those federal relations by which Christians of one age might represent those of another. It fixes our attention at once on that strictly personal account, in which every one shall bear his own burden, and receive according to his own deeds. The message of God by Ezekiel applies here in all its impressive force. The soul that suffers with Christ, it shall reign with Him. The martyrs shall not suffer and obey for the saints of the Millennium, nor shall the millennial saints reign instead of the martyrs.

But further, the vision does not mention a resurrection of souls, as is often carelessly assumed. The souls of the martyrs are said to *live*, but not to rise again. Now, in the language of Scripture, the life of the spirit consists in union with God, but the life of soul in union with the body. Thus our Lord is said to have poured out his soul unto death at the moment when he commended his spirit to his Heavenly Father. To declare, then, of the souls of the martyrs that they lived, has exactly the same force as to say they were re-united to their bodies, and

implies the further truth, that those bodies also were raised from the dead. And so the prophet expounds it by the words which immediately follow, "This is the first resurrection."

But this view will be further established by comparing the words of the text with the vision of the fifth seal. We have there the following description:—"I saw under the altar the souls of them which were slain for the Word of God, and the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them which dwell on the earth. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was told them that they should rest yet for a season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed as they were, were fulfilled." The two passages form a moral contrast; in the first the martyrs cry unto God for deliverance, and in the second they receive a full answer to their prayer.

Now the vision of the souls under the altar bears throughout a character strictly personal. By what title do they appeal to God? They employ an unusual term, *ὁ Δεσπότης*, which describes Him as the sovereign owner of individual persons. They appeal to Him as holy and true, in his promises to the righteous and threatenings to the wicked, and their faithful execution. They call upon Him as the avenger of oppression and the rewarder of his suffer-

ing people. Their prayers are not undefined wishes for some general blessings to the Church, but a plea with God for the exercise of judicial righteousness. They are commanded to rest for a season, till the number of their fellow-servants is complete. And this clearly conveys a promise that their desire shall then be accomplished, and the noble army of martyrs receive together a common recompence of reward.

Such is the prayer of these martyrs, and such the promise which they receive. Our text shows us their prayer answered, and the promise fulfilled. The number of their brethren is at length completed; and the Lord, who is holy and true, manifests both his truth and his holiness. Babylon, in which the blood of the saints is found, is judged and overthrown; the persecutors are slain; and the souls which had cried for vengeance from the altar live and reign with their Lord. And what metaphor can have a right to step in between the martyrs' prayer and its recorded answer? Why should we dream of transferring to others, who have never suffered, that Divine recompence which has been promised, long before, to the sufferers themselves?

5. Another argument of the same kind may be drawn from THE MENTION OF THE CONFESSORS. For though all the armies in heaven, or the whole Church of the first-born, and they who fear God,

both small and great, are included in the promise, the martyrs and confessors stand prominent in the vision. To encourage Christians to a bold confession of the faith in times of peril, there is a separate notice of those "who had not worshipped the beast or his image, nor received his mark on their forehead or on their hands."

Let us compare these words with the solemn warning in Rev. xiv. The third angel there proclaims with a loud voice, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. . . . And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (Rev. xiv. 9—11.)

Here, again, the two passages stand in evident contrast. Two opposite classes are presented to us; those who worship the beast, and those who worship him not. The former receive a most fearful threatening; the latter are seen in the enjoyment of a glorious promise.

Now the threatening, as every one will own, must be personally fulfilled. Who would venture to turn aside the keen edge of this sword of the Spirit? Who would dare to affirm that the warning of the angel has no fulfilment in the actual worshippers of the beast, but describes something in which those worshippers have no part, or the

miserable state of the world at the loosing of Satan? Such glosses could serve no end, but to abolish the faith of Christians in the connexion between present sin and future punishment. Every one must feel how dangerous it would be to tamper in this manner with the most solemn threatenings of God.

But if such a license is intolerable when applied to the threatening, why should it be more credible, or more safe, in the exposition of the promise? The language in each case is exactly similar. The warning of the angel will assuredly be fulfilled in personal judgment on the worshippers of the beast; and those who have refused to worship shall, therefore, in their own persons, be partakers of this glorious reward.

6. THE RESURRECTION OF THE REST OF THE DEAD forms a sixth proof that the first resurrection is a literal event. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years: but the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished."

No proof can well be more decisive than is contained in these words. The first resurrection, and that of the rest of the dead, must be of the same kind. Now of what nature is this last? The prophecy gives a distinct reply. After the close of the thousand years we have this impressive description.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand

before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death."

These words answer, in all respects, to the predicted resurrection of the rest of the dead. And since all allow that they describe a bodily resurrection, the first resurrection, also, must be of the same kind. The only way to avoid this conclusion is by embracing the strange theory, that the last confederacy of apostates is that second revival of which the prophet here speaks.

But, surely, of all the distortions which Scripture has been made to endure, this is one of the most violent. The prediction announces a resurrection of the rest of the dead. Two events follow, entirely opposite in their nature. The objects of the first are nations living in the four corners of the earth; those of the second, are four times described emphatically as *the dead*. The first has no title given to it; the other is called, in plain contrast to the first resurrection, the second death.

The first is an act of mad rebellion on the part of man; the second is, like the first resurrection, a signal manifestation of the power and holiness of God. To transfer to the former of these events, characters which so plainly belong only to the latter, is to contradict the Scriptures, and not to explain them.

There are other objections, however, not less decisive. Let us grant, for one moment, that both resurrections are figurative, and denote a revival of eminent holiness, and another, equally conspicuous, of rebellion and wickedness. And what conclusion will follow? Before the resurrection of the martyrs, neither of these parties will have risen. So that in the previous state of the Church, holiness and unholiness must have been extinct together; truth and righteousness, sin and wickedness, must have vanished together; and heaven and hell, at one and the same time, have ceased their empire upon earth.

Again, if we examine the connexion in which these words appear, how strained and unnatural do they become on the figurative interpretation. "I witnessed," the prophet will then say to us, "an eminent revival of holiness, but there was not, till long after, an eminent revival of wickedness! The Church on earth was conspicuously holy; but it was not conspicuously unholy at the same time!"

Surely it is far better to submit our prejudices to the plain words of the vision, than to force them, by the harshest violence, into so feeble and unnatural a meaning.

The suggested explanation, therefore, by whatever test it is examined, is equally baseless. It contradicts the clearest features of contrast between the apostasy and the judgment; it deprives the terms of connexion in the verse, of all their force, and makes them worse than superfluous; and it involves consequences plainly absurd with regard to the previous state of the world. Therefore, since the rising of the rest of the dead is proved to be a literal event, the first resurrection must be literal also.

Further arguments for the same truth might be drawn, if needful, from each remaining clause of the vision. It might be shown, for instance, that the two statements, "this is the first resurrection," "this is the second death," are a designed and evident contrast; and that since the latter describes the final doom of the wicked, the former must equally describe the resurrection glory of the righteous. It might be proved, again, that the expression, *to have a part*, is constantly used for a personal and individual allotment of reward or punishment, and is especially employed thus in the remainder of this same prophecy. Again, the

peculiar privilege, to be free from the power of the second death, loses all distinctive force when applied to living saints in the Millennium, but recovers its full emphasis by the literal interpretation. The royal priesthood, ascribed to these risen saints, confirms the same doctrine, since it refers us to that song which they had before uttered in the presence of the Saviour, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth."

These various proofs, drawn from every clause of the vision itself, are confirmed by many allusions in other Scriptures. I will notice three only, from the three main passages in which St. Paul treats of the resurrection.

In the first of these, the apostle comforts the Thessalonians under the loss of their departed friends. He declares, by express revelation, that the rising of the dead saints will be previous to the translation of those who still remain alive. But, in this previous resurrection, there is no allusion whatever to the rising of the wicked. Nay, the scope of his argument seems to exclude it. The topic of consolation which he suggests is one of priority in time. "We who are alive," he says, "shall not be beforehand with them that sleep." But if the unfaithful dead were also raised before the translation of the living, a jar and

discord seems to enter into the tender harmony of this Divine message. Surely, in that case, some other topic than the order of time would have been chosen by the apostle, as the watchword of consolation. But, once admit the doctrine of the first resurrection, and the harmony is restored. The same precedence which marks the solemn contrast between them that are saved, and them that perish, is then repeated on a smaller scale, in the precedence of the departed saints over living believers.

In the fifteenth of Corinthians, again, the same truth is still more clearly implied. "Every man," it is said, "shall rise in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; *afterward* they that are Christ's at his coming. *Then* cometh the end." The original word, in each of the two clauses, equally denotes succession in order of time. In the former case, the interval is more than 1800 years, between the resurrection of our Lord, and that of his people. A similar interval is naturally implied between *their* resurrection, and the end; when death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire, and the kingdom shall be resigned to the Father.

In the still later Epistle to the Philippians, there is a further allusion to the same truth. The apostle there sums up the expression of his

desires in these remarkable words, "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." The word is a compound, which occurs here only, and might be rendered, "the peculiar resurrection." The emphasis is even redoubled, "the peculiar resurrection, even that from among the dead." This might, in itself, be referred to the momentous difference in the nature of the resurrection which he sought. But the context points strongly to the further meaning of a precedence in point of time. The blessing is metaphorically described as journeying towards the Church. Those who press forward with earnest desire to attain it, meet the heavenly gift on its way; while, as for others, it passes them by, and leaves them to the prospect of the widely different resurrection then to follow. The more closely the passage is examined, the more close and full will appear its harmony with the literal sense of the present vision.

Finally, the whole analogy of the word of prophecy in the Old and the New Testament, confirms and establishes the same doctrine. The prophecies of the Old Testament teach us, in numberless passages, that a time is coming of happiness, holiness, and peace to the whole earth, under the kingdom of Messiah. The New Testament, with equal uniformity, declares that the affliction of the Church, and the abounding of

iniquity, will not cease till the return of the Saviour. The doctrine of the first resurrection alone can reconcile these contrasted statements; and is therefore founded, in reality, on the consenting testimony of the whole Word of God.

II. Let us now consider, secondly, the chief objections which have been urged against the doctrine. There are many which arise merely from a misconception of its nature, and which need not detain us. I will now confine myself to four of the most important or popular, and two of these will require only a passing notice.

1. And, first, it is alleged that, unless this resurrection be figurative, it is an exception to the general character of the Apocalypse, from its beginning to its close. The vision of the previous chapter, it is said, is clearly symbolic; the dragon, the chain, and the seal, are all symbols; and therefore the resurrection must be figurative also.

But this plausible argument has several fatal defects. First, symbolic prophecies have literal statements interspersed, which serve for a key to the rest. Such is the voice of the Spirit over the departed faithful, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And such, exactly, is the message in the words of our

text—"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." We might, with as much reason, rob the departed of those words of Divine comfort, as convert this promise of the first resurrection into a mere figure.

Next, even the symbolic parts of a vision have a mixed character. When real persons, the highest in their kind, are mentioned by their proper titles, there is no room for symbols; the objects represent themselves. God, and Christ, and the good angels, Satan, and evil spirits, and redeemed saints on earth or in heaven, are never emblems. Forsake this maxim, and symbolic prophecy becomes a chaos, in which nothing is fixed, and where fancy runs riot in its own excesses.

So it is in the passages before us. The Word of God, and the armies in heaven, are not symbols, but realities. But the sword, the wine-press, the rod of iron, the fine linen, and the diadems, are imagery by which the nature of these real personages is more fully displayed. Satan, who is bound, is a real person, the fallen archangel. But the dragon-form, the chain, and the seal, are all emblems, which denote a real and effectual restraint upon all his works of darkness. The symbols, in each case, cluster around a literal statement, on which they all depend. And so, too, with the first resurrection. Those who par-

take in it are real, definite persons, the armies of heaven, the martyrs and confessors of Christ. But the thrones are an emblem to describe their kingly dignity and honour; while the words, "they lived and reigned with Christ," are a plain and literal description of their high reward.

Finally, the symbols which do exist have their proper and distinct meaning. And here is a third error of the figurative exposition. It not only turns real objects into symbols, but the one symbol which does occur, is distorted from its proper sense. *Thrones* are never used to denote either holiness, or self-government, or peace and prosperity in general. They are the emblem of royal dominion. The description thus answers, in all respects, to the words of St. Paul, when he describes the resurrection-dignity of Christ's followers, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Do ye not know that we shall judge angels?"

2. A second objection to the literal sense of the vision has been found, in the great apostasy at the close of the Millennium. Can it be possible, it is asked, that after such a glorious manifestation of Christ and his people, wickedness should ever prevail again, and need a fresh exercise of Divine power, to rescue the Church, and overthrow her enemies? Whatever were the

hardness of the heart, incredulity, it is asserted, would be impossible, when the senses had been overpowered by such a display of visible majesty.

But, surely, a deeper reflection of the ways of Providence will make us discard at once such dangerous reasonings. Who are we, that we should pretend to fathom the deceitfulness of the heart, which God himself has pronounced unsearchable? What have we seen in every past stage of the world's history, but unexpected proofs of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and fresh triumphs of Divine power and goodness? Who could have thought that the Jews, after tenfold miracles, could have rebelled so often in the wilderness; or that with the pillar of cloud and fire ever before them, they could have worshipped the molten calf at the very foot of the mount of glory? What saint, under the Old Testament, could have supposed that a thousand years after Messiah had come, the world would still be drowned in idolatry and superstition? Which of them could have dreamed, that near two thousand years after the Son of God himself had become incarnate for man's salvation, a whole nation of his worshippers should turn open Atheists, and bid blasphemous defiance to the Lord of heaven? Yet such things have happened almost in our own day. And shall we still assign fancied bounds and limits

to human perverseness, or think that signs and wonders must needs accomplish at once what has never yet been effected by the Gospel of Christ and the dying agonies of the Son of God? Surely we ought rather, with Job, to lay our hand upon our mouth, and to exclaim with the apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments; and his ways past finding out!"

The two remaining objections, one doctrinal and the other practical, are of a still more serious kind. The first resurrection, it is asserted, contradicts the general tenour of those texts which relate to the resurrection; and is Judaizing and carnal in its own nature, dishonourable to the Saviour, and degrading the hopes of the Christian.

3. The former of these has been urged with much confidence in a recent work. "Never," it is said, "was there an hypothesis encumbered by such innumerable difficulties of principle and detail. Scripture, in very numerous passages, describes the reward of the righteous and wicked as simultaneous in texts which, beyond dispute, refer to the second coming." Twelve such passages are then adduced. "This enormous weight of evidence, it is affirmed, can be escaped only by viewing the thousand years as one day of judgment." And this is thought to be inconsistent with the final apostasy, and to require the mention not of one, but of two resurrections.

This objection seems to admit of the clearest reply by considering its parts in the reverse order.

And, first, the Scripture does speak of two resurrections, the resurrection of life and that of damnation; the first resurrection, or the peculiar resurrection from among the dead, and the second death, which is a resurrection also. It is true that it is spoken of more frequently without the express separation being made. But so also is the coming of the Lord spoken of in the Old Testament, when both advents were still future.

Next, that the Millennium is indeed one great day of judgment, is a simple conclusion from the words of St. Peter—"One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It is also confirmed by the analogy of the day of grace and salvation, which has now lasted through eighteen centuries. There is nothing whatever in the last apostasy to contradict this view. Wonderful forbearance in the midst of vengeance has always been a most conspicuous character of the Divine judgments.

Let us now examine briefly in detail this fancied weight of opposing evidence. One passage adduced is 1 Cor. xv. 26—54. But the statements of the apostle in this chapter, as we have seen already, establish the fact of an interval between the two resurrections. In the second Epistle to the

Thessalonians we are told, that the Lord will be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, at the same time with the deliverance of His people. But here, also, the whole context is a demonstrative proof that the advent precedes the Millennium; and, by direct consequence, refutes the figurative resurrection. The *hour* mentioned in John v. 28, wherein all that are in the graves shall come forth, is made a third argument. Yet this precisely answers to the *hour* or *season* named in the twenty-fifth verse, which denotes the whole time of the Gospel, or a season of at least eighteen hundred years. The declaration in Dan. xii. 2. of the many sleepers in the dust who shall awake, is a fourth passage adduced. But this, however obscure in some respects, is clearly in favour of the doctrine. The lesson which it teaches most plainly is, that a literal resurrection attends the deliverance of the Jews, and therefore precedes the Millennium.

Four other passages which are brought forward are entirely neutral and equally consistent with either view. Such are the declarations of St. Paul, that we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ; and that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. And such, again, are the two parables of the ten talents and the wedding feast.

There remain then only four texts that can, even in appearance, be alleged against the doctrine. These are the two parables, of the tares, and the net cast into the sea; the declaration at the close of Matt. xvi.; and the parable of the sheep and the goats, or description of the last judgment. None of these reveal to us an interval between the sentence on the righteous and the wicked.

How then shall we reconcile these words of our Lord with his own true saying, revealed to the beloved disciple? By one simple maxim, which runs through all the inspired predictions. That maxim may be styled the law of sacred perspective. It is in prophecy as it is in the natural landscape. Events, while remote, are grouped together on the far horizon, catch the gleam of the same distant sunlight, and are blended in one common vision of glory or judgment. This law of prophetic revelation is most of all conspicuous in short statements of Scripture, or in parables which have chiefly a moral purpose. So, in the passages before us, the grand object was to impress the conscience with the unutterable contrast between the doom of the righteous and the wicked. And since the nearest of those events was still distant nearly two thousand years, it is not surprising that, in this first book of the New Testament, they should

be grouped in one simple contrast of unspeakable solemnity and power.*

Let us compare the first promise in the garden of Eden—"He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." How and when was this promise fulfilled? You will answer, in the cross and passion of our Lord. Then, in that hour of darkness, the malice of hell was wreaked on the Son of the Virgin, and principalities and powers were spoiled and led captive by the Son of God. But was the prophecy then exhausted? Why then does St. Paul renew the promise in those words, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly?" Why does St. John, in this book, describe the enemy as cast down from heaven, sealed in the pit, and cast into the lake of fire? Plainly because in that first promise the work of both advents is blended together, as one mighty and consummated victory over the prince of darkness. Now, if the long course of events which range through three thousand years are thus united in the earliest promise, it cannot be strange that the same principle should reappear in these impressive descriptions of the final judgment.

The strongest evidence, therefore, which can be brought against the doctrine by its ablest adversaries is in part neutral, in part may be reconciled

• Note A.

with it by a maxim of uniform application on the sacred prophecies, and in part confirms the very truth which it is alleged to disprove.

4. But the first resurrection, it is further objected, is a Jewish and carnal doctrine. This vague impression, which exists in the minds of many Christians, has more weight than any distinct arguments. It had its birth, they imagine, in the false expectation of a temporal Messiah, and still bears the marks of its unworthy parentage. It is, in their view, a gross conceit of unspiritual minds. It reverses the order of the dispensations, and turns us back to weak and beggarly elements. That the saints should have an earthly dominion, and reign here below, gives an opening to carnal fancies, obscures the spiritual nature of the Christian's hope, and debases its high and heavenly glory.

This is a serious and weighty objection, which requires a full and deliberate answer. No doctrine can possibly be true, which dishonours the Saviour, or is adverse to Christian holiness. But it is by no means the safest course, to determine first what doctrines we, in our wisdom, think reasonable or profitable, and then to bend the Word of God to our own conclusions. It is far wiser, first simply to inquire, what hath the Lord spoken? and then, after believing his messages, to rise into the discernment of their wisdom and holiness.

Such is the right and safe course to pursue in the present inquiry. The doctrine must first be received and enforced, simply on the ground of the Divine record of its truth : but then we may boldly accept this further challenge. The first resurrection, when freed from the glosses of unworthy friends or prejudiced enemies, will be found superior in every point to the rival exposition ; more noble, more spiritual, more deeply rooted in the analogies of Scripture, and more brightly illustrative of the righteousness, grace, and wisdom of God.

Doubtless, if this resurrection were made only the prelude to a life of sensual enjoyments, the objection would be fatal. The doctrine might then be justly cast aside, as debasing the hope of the Gospel into a Mahometan paradise. But such is not the statement of Scripture, nor the view of those who hold to its literal meaning. No : we believe firmly that all they who are counted worthy of this resurrection shall be equal with the angels ; that their manner of life shall be glorious and heavenly ; and that in stainless purity they shall enjoy the closest fellowship with their exalted Saviour.

What, then, are the distinctive features of the doctrine, defamed so often as gross and carnal in its nature ? First of all, it places the resurrection

of the saints nearer to us, by a thousand years, than the opposite view. Next, it joins that great event with a renovation, not a total destruction, of the earth; a renovation to be afterwards completed in that new earth which shall remain for ever; and in which a remnant of living men are spared, to form the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and to people the world with a righteous generation. Thirdly, it ascribes to the saints of the resurrection, beside their heavenly blessedness, a rule and dominion over this renewed earth; and pronounces them joint heirs with their Lord in the inheritance of the world to come.

Now first, the doctrine, thus explained, is in harmony with the deepest analogies of the Word of God. Let us turn once more to the vision. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Why is this precise period thus marked off, as it were, from the immeasurable ages of eternity? The words of St. Peter suggest an answer: "A thousand years with the Lord are as one day." And what mysterious day can be here designed? The key is given us in the very opening of the Word of God. There, in the birth-week of creation, the outlines of God's providence in redemption are set before us. In six days, these lower heavens and earth were made, and on the seventh, God rested from his works. So, for

near six thousand years, the mystery of redemption is carried on, till at length, at the sounding of the seventh angel, the mystery of God shall be finished, and the Millennial Sabbath shall complete and hallow the new creation of God.

Let us now search the type more closely, and to what conclusion does it lead? At the close of the sixth day, woman was formed from man, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the crowning mystery of creative wisdom. And thus, on the dawn of the first Sabbath, creation appeared complete under its appointed ruler; and man, with his new-formed bride, stood forth, upon a sinless world, in the visible exercise of supreme dominion.

The first Adam was the figure of Him who is to come: the second Adam is the Lord from heaven. Therefore do we learn, from this Divine type, that when the Millennial Sabbath shall dawn upon our world, the whole Church of the firstborn will be manifested along with their Lord, and will share in his glorious dominion over a renovated universe. Far from reversing the order of the dispensations, the first resurrection alone preserves it inviolate, and unfolds the magnificent harmony between the earliest and latest revelations of the Word of God.

But, again, this doctrine yields a bright illus-

tration of the Divine righteousness. Can the opposite view admit, on this head, of one moment's comparison? The office of righteousness is visibly, in the sight of men and angels, to connect sin with punishment, and obedience and faithful suffering with a gracious recompence. Remove the first resurrection from the millennial hopes of the Church, and the traces of this high attribute are very greatly obscured. Restore the doctrine, and that Divine perfection shines forth afresh, in the view of the world, with a supernatural splendour. The scene of the martyrs' sufferings shall witness their exaltation. They who have been rejected outcasts in a world of rebels, shall be crowned with honour and dominion over a world redeemed from the fall. The glorious equity of God shall thus be no less conspicuous than the triumph of his grace; and men and angels shall join in that adoring song: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; *just* and *true* are thy ways, O thou King of saints!"

And if the righteousness of God is thus brightly exhibited in the first resurrection, the riches of his grace and condescension are equally displayed. The true source of the objection to the doctrine as carnal, lies in this very fact, that it is too intensely spiritual for our earthly vision. It is dark only with the excess of its own brightness.

It exhibits the grace of the Saviour in so wonderful a light, that our weak faith is unable to credit its glorious reality.

For what is the nature of the usual objections? It is so degrading to the Lord of glory, to appear once more upon this lower world, or to manifest himself as the King of Israel! It is so unnatural to bring down glorified saints from the transcending delights of the beatific vision, to have intercourse with those who are sojourners in the dust. No, doubtless, they will be rapt too deeply in their own ineffable enjoyments, and resent the thought as an unworthy degradation. It is a notion which is revolting to our judgment, and goes cross to our natural reason; a new humiliation of our Lord, and gratuitous dishonour to his people, an inconceivable descent, and an unutterable meanness!

Now what are these objections, my brethren, but an unconscious tribute to the excellence of the truth which they assail? What are they but an echo of that inspired declaration, "My ways are not your ways, neither are your thoughts my thoughts, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts?" Is not condescension, immeasurable condescension, one of the most glorious attributes of Jehovah? Is not this the truth which has astonished and

confounded his holiest servants in their hours of deepest meditation? Oh, yes, it is just such unutterable meannesses as this which prove the unutterable brightness of the Divine glory ! “ Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his dwelling so high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth ! ”

We cannot conceive that the Lord, exalted above all heavens, should stoop to an earthly dominion, even though its fruits were light and gladness to the subject nations. How, then, should he have stooped to mockery and scorn, to the manger and the desert, to agony and the cross? Even, now, amidst the songs of angels, he counts the steps of his people, and numbers the hairs of their head. Even now, while all heaven is adoring in his presence, he guides the atom which dances in the sunbeam, and clothes with a beauty, more excellent than the glory of Solomon, the humblest flower of the field. And is it still with us, as it was with the disciples of old? Does the greatness of his condescension, after all these wondrous examples, still surpass our belief; so that he must renew that reproof to us once more. “ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken? ” Surely it adds a fresh brightness to the diadem of his glory, and softens the blaze of his Majesty, by

the tenderness of an infinite compassion and love, when we receive the promise in its simple meaning! He who was content for our sakes to be incarnate of the Virgin, will never count it unworthy of his greatness to fulfil the rest of the angel's message—"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

And so will it be also with people of Christ, as with their Lord. The disciple is not above his master; but every one who is perfect shall be as his master. We may imagine, indeed, to ourselves a celestial happiness, in which every believer shall be entranced and swallowed up in his own enjoyments. We may fancy that the soul will be unconscious of all things but its own supreme felicity, and that the whole universe beside will have disappeared from its view. We may conceive it the height of spiritual attainment to forget the rock whence we are hewn, and the pit from whence we are digged, and to have the eye of our spirit fastened, in a mystical abstraction, on the dazzling effulgence of heaven. But such is most assuredly not the scriptural account of the final blessedness of the redeemed. No; the people of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, will be like their Lord. They will resemble the Saviour in all

his Divine perfections. And shall the lovely grace of condescension alone be wanting? They shall be equal to the angels, those ministering spirits, whose delight it is to minister to the heirs of salvation. And if equal in every other grace, shall they who have been themselves raised from the dust be inferior to those blessed spirits in this excellence alone? Far be it from our thoughts, indeed, to ascribe to them one taint of corruption, or to assign an earthly happiness, such as the pleasures of earth are now, to the children of the resurrection. Whatever heaven contains of the beautiful and the glorious, we freely accord to them as their everlasting portion. But will it not add to their holy joy its purest element, that amidst the splendour of their own exaltation, they can yet delight in offices and in thoughts of love towards this lower world? Yes, even a heathen, though the first of heathens, can tell us, that pride and envy are far aloof from the heavenly company. The mock dignity of the carnal heart, selfish and solitary amidst its own fancied greatness, can have no place among the redeemed children of God. Their heavenly Father, they well know, who has infinite worlds under his control, paints the wing of the insect, and adorns the petals of the flower. And in that day, his people shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. They shall behold

Him in the greatness of his terrible Majesty; and they shall see Him also in all the unspeakable condescension of his goodness. And can we then wonder, that while heaven is not too high or too vast for their delighted enjoyment, earth itself is not too mean or low to gather around it their most tender sympathies, or to be the object of their most active and unwearied love.

III. The reality of the first resurrection, and the weakness of the objections commonly urged against it, has now, I trust, been clearly established, by the simple evidence of the Word of God. It is time to leave these straits and shallows of argument, and to meditate more directly on the great doctrine itself, and the practical lessons which it yields to us. May the Holy Spirit graciously be present with us, that conviction may ripen into faith, and truth in the understanding may become power in the conscience, and life in the heart! May He preserve us from the danger of a mere speculative creed, and awaken our souls to the grandeur of the hopes which are set before us in this passage of his Word! Among the various lessons which we ought to derive from this truth, I would dwell upon three only. The First Resurrection, then, is adapted to deepen the impression of eternal things, to deliver us from the power of superstitious delusions, and, finally,

to quicken our zeal, and enlarge our hopes, in the service of Christ.

In this first place, this doctrine is suited to bring near to us the thought of eternity, and to deepen its impression on our souls.

The importance of the resurrection itself may seem, perhaps, at first sight, to make every question of time or order, trifling and superfluous. What, it may be asked, are a thousand years, in comparison with eternity? Why dwell on the interval which may exist between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, when there is but one question of infinite moment, in which of those two companies we shall be found? Why fix our thoughts on events comparatively minute, at the risk of throwing into the shade the one grand contrast between life eternal, and everlasting ruin?

However practical and solid such objections may appear, there lurks under them a dangerous illusion. Are Christians then, in very truth, thus swallowed up by the thought of eternity? Are the resurrection and the glory to come, thus hourly before their eyes, deadening them to the vanities of earth, quickening them to songs of praise, and enlivening their souls by the near prospect of eternal blessedness? Have they risen to that high elevation, in which the present has no more power

than the future, the near than the distant; but time and eternity are weighed in the balance of Omniscience, and this world is nothing compared with that world to come? Alas, it is far otherwise. The power of the resurrection, even in the holiest Christians, and its hold on their thoughts, falls infinitely short of the glorious reality. The contrast is still more painful in the Church at large. How few traces are to be found, in the walks of daily life, or even in the councils of Christian nations, of faith in a coming resurrection! How seldom are we reminded that the rich and the poor, rulers and subjects, statesmen themselves, and the millions for whom they legislate, are alike immortal; and must soon rise to enter on that life, which is real and everlasting.

How, then, shall this fearful delusion be overcome, which hides from our thoughts the real vastness of eternity? Besides the grand source of the evil, in the unbelief of the heart, there are two others, which have their seat in the understanding. We remove eternity into the far distance; and then rest content with the general phrase, without dwelling in thought on the separate ages of which it is composed, and which make up its ever-growing immensity. The first resurrection is a Divine remedy for both these illusions. It brings eternity near to us, in the very regions of time, and

teaches us to reckon, one by one, the millennial ages which compose its perpetual duration.

We may here borrow a lesson from human science. How do we gain the fullest impression of the immensity of space? Is it by gazing at once on the clear sky? No; this may convey some impression of vastness, but far short of the truth. How then may we expand this vague feeling into a juster view of the grandeur of the universe? A middle term must be brought into the reckoning. From distances familiar to our senses the astronomer determines, first, the size of the globe on which we dwell. From the size of the earth itself, by a measurable proportion, he rises to the dimension of its annual orbit. And now, with millions of miles for our unit, we ascend by a second step of sublime geometry, and obtain a limit for the least distance of the nearest star. And thus at length, by these intermediate stages of ascent, we attain a far nobler, larger conception of the immensity of God's visible creation, than we could ever have gained by gazing directly on the starry firmament.

Now in this doctrine the Holy Spirit employs just the same process to awaken in our souls some due impression of the grandeur of eternity. The hope of the resurrection is no longer buried in the far distance, but stands forth the nearest and fore-

most object in the expectations of the Church. And since our eyes might else be dazzled by its overwhelming nearness, a middle term is interposed. The millennial kingdom is set before us, a pledge and a preparation for the everlasting happiness to ensue. The Spirit of God would thus raise us, by a gradual ascent, to a livelier and deeper impression of eternal things. He opens to our view a glimpse of that sublime calendar by which He plans the course of infinite ages. That Millennium, which crowns and consummates the world's history, is seen to be with the Lord as one day, the first and lowest unit by which to trace out the immeasurable duration of the world to come.

Let us cease, then, my brethren, from the vain fancy, that we can grasp by a single effort, or reach at one single bound, the vastness of eternity. Rather let us use in faith that ladder which God himself has provided us. The first resurrection will then be seen in its true light. It will be found mighty to break in pieces the bands of worldliness, and to raise the Church afresh to the devotedness of apostles in the times of old. Eternity would then be more to us than a name. It would be a thought ever filling, gladdening, enlarging, and overwhelming our souls; while, through the coming Millennium of resurrection glory, we search into those countless ages when God shall be all in all.

Let us understand then, clearly, this double power of the truth in our text, to scatter the illusions of time, and fix our thoughts on the things unseen and eternal. The popular doctrine removes the advent of the Lord and the full blessedness of his people into a distant age; this truth brings them near to us, and places them full in our view. But it also stoops to the weakness of our faith. Just as the astronomer starts from a fresh base, when he would leave our little system, and dive into the immensity of the firmament; so does the millennial kingdom of the saints lend us a Divine basis from which to start afresh in exploring the vastness of a coming eternity.

And may we not, without presumption, trace the parallel a step further? The Millennium, we are plainly taught, is the antitype of the first Sabbath. And, for ought we know, the resemblance may not stop here. The whole law was only a shadow of the good things to come. What then if its seasons and various celebrations, its solemn feasts and holy jubilees, should prove to be also a foreshadowing of eternal things? What if the Millennium, that great day of the Lord, should be only the first unit in a larger calendar, the base of a fresh departure to mete out the recurrence of festal ages in the kingdom of glory, each marked by the display of some distinct attribute of

Divinity, and some peculiar manifestation of God's infinite love? Yes, the meaning and depth of this revelation may not be exhausted when the thousand years themselves have expired. That day of the Lord, throughout eternity, shall form a fresh era to the new creation of God. A new and wondrous calendar, whose days are millennial and whose years immeasurable ages, may thence have its birth, by which the redeemed, in the presence of their Lord, shall measure out their undying and immortal blessedness. O let us praise and adore the love and condescension of God, who has let down this truth, like the ladder of Jacob, from that eternity which he himself inhabits, that he may raise our souls to a larger and more delightful apprehension of the glory which is shortly to be revealed!

But the first resurrection is not merely adapted to deliver us from practical Infidelity, and to fix the eye of the soul on eternal realities, it is also a mighty engine of Divine grace, to set us free from the power of every superstitious delusion.

Open unbelief, or religious indifference, are not the only dangers to which the Church of Christ is exposed. It has travailed with sorrow under Pagan persecution, and sojourned in the wilderness through ages of Papal superstition and darkness; and seen for a little moment, the volcanic violence of open, Infidel apostasy. Her last enemy, we have

cause to think, will be neither Popery nor Infidelity alone, but a strange union of both. It will be Infidelity, not as it was seen at its birth, naked and hideous; but full-grown in Satanic wisdom, and clothing itself with all the robes of superstition. It may perhaps adopt everything of Christianity, except Christ himself and his salvation. It may boast its forms and ceremonies, its creed and miracles, its temples and altars, its priesthood and costly offerings, its high antiquity, and the catholic consent of admiring nations. All that is beautiful and mysterious may be pressed into its service, and do homage at its shrine.

Even now, perhaps, amidst other signs of the times, the first elements of this strange union may have begun to appear. Works invented and enjoined by man instead of true faith in Christ, the consent of man replacing the sure testimony of God, sacramental forms and shadowy mysteries, instead of the new creation of living holiness—these are the elements of its growth, the marks of its progress, and the sinews of its strength. When art and taste shall have lent it all the beauty of their decorations, and architecture all its grandeur, and antiquity all its mystery, and talent all the sorcery of its eloquence,—then, amidst the sound of harp and psaltery and all pleasant music, the gigantic delusion may move on to its short triumph,

and heat sevenfold the furnace of the last persecution for the Church of God.

Now what power shall raise us above this temptation, and break the spell of this last enchantment? A Gospel in word only, a lifeless theory, made up of barren notions, cannot possibly stand. No, it must be the Gospel of Christ, in its power, and depth, and fulness, and above all, the Gospel of the kingdom.

The age, we are told, is yearning for mystery; and the assertion is partly true. Bare, naked scepticism, seems to have wearied even unbelievers with its wretched emptiness. But where there is not the love of the truth as it is in Jesus, the love of mystery is at best an ambiguous passion. The enemy of souls knows well how to press it into his own service. It is a possible, and yet a fearful thing, when the word of God is neglected, to part with one delusion for another, and to exchange the shallowness only for the depths of Satan. The mystery which lies in obscuring the message of the Gospel, while it revels in the ages of superstitious darkness, what is it but a broken fragment from the inscription which God himself with his own finger has written on the forehead of the mystic Babylon?

But whatever form this last temptation may assume, the doctrine of the first resurrection will be

mighty, through God, to deliver us from its power. Are we tempted to forsake the word of God for human authorities, to defame the Scriptures as a mere patchwork of chance, which must have its defects supplied by unwritten traditions, claiming to be divine? Here we see the perfection of that word, the deep harmony of all its truths, the secret links which unite its earliest and latest revelations, thus prove the Divine completeness of the message it contains, and of that counsel of redemption which it reveals. Is the venerable name of the Church made the watchword of delusion? Are catholic consent and apostolic antiquity made a snare to entangle us with a yoke of legal bondage, and to turn our hopes from the cross of Christ to the doctrines and commandments of men? The hope of the resurrection unmasks the wretched fallacy, and scatters the delusion in the light of eternity. It bids us renounce the fallacious consent of the many who are called for the protesting witness of the few who are chosen. It warns us from that catholic consent of superstition and formality, which serves only to bind the tares in bundles for the burning; and bids us embrace the true consent of faith and holiness in the sons of the resurrection, who, all of them, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Here also we

learn clearly the great lesson, how to distinguish aright between the decent and comely forms of the Church, and that breath of life on which her very being depends. With the first resurrection full in view, we see how wide and comprehensive is the statement of Christ's apostle. Yes, whether there be forms, they shall fail; whether there be succession, it shall cease; whether there be orders and sacraments, they shall vanish away; but faith, love, and holiness, and all the fruits of the Spirit, shall abide for ever.

Or, again, is the love of mystery the form which the temptation assumes? Do we long for something deeper and fuller than a sensual and material age can supply? Are we prone to despise the Gospel of Christ itself as too plain and simple, and to prefer an abstruse and profound ceremonial to the worship which is in spirit and in truth? Unsatisfied with the spiritual desert around us, do we look back with wistful eyes to the ages of superstition, and say in our hearts, "Let us make a captain, and return back to Egypt"? What an answer is here to our lawful desires! what a corrective to our delusions! This doctrine of the first resurrection speaks to us as with a voice from heaven. It says to us, Fling away those shadowy mysteries which are leading you to ages of superstitious darkness; but embrace the mystery which

God himself has revealed, a mystery of light and holiness, bright with the glories of a coming eternity. Here there is wide room for the noblest exercises of the spiritual mind. Here there is a safe and ample field for the utmost range of your renewed imagination. Here mystery crowds on mystery, in the prospect of happy intercourse with patriarchs and prophets, and of high and holy fellowship with the risen and exalted Saviour. Long not, then, after Babylon, even though mystery be part of the name she wears on her forehead, when the hour of her destruction is close at hand. Dream not of honouring God by lighted tapers, and gorgeous rites of bodily service, when the true light of heaven is about to rise upon us, and the shadows of the world are ready to flee away. Strive not to burden the Church with a fresh yoke of ceremonial bondage, when she ought, each moment, to be waiting for her inheritance, and for the voice which shall summon her to the glorious liberty of the children of God! Only let us keep, my brethren, these eternal realities full in our view; let us only root in our souls this hope of the first resurrection; and then no forms will satisfy us, no high-sounding names deceive us, no love of mystery will lead us astray: even the last and severest hour of temptation, which shall sift every false professor, shall only prepare us for the

coming of the Lord, and a gracious welcome in the day of his appearing.

And now, finally, let us consider for a few moments the tendency of this doctrine to quicken the zeal, and enlarge the hopes, of the servants of Christ.

It is true that an opposite assertion has been often made. Hope, it is said, is the parent of activity. But this doctrine destroys all hope of full success in missionary labours, and, therefore, must paralyze the zeal of the Church, and damp all efforts for the conversion and salvation of the world. The more we expect from Divine miracles, the less strenuous shall we be, it is thought, in the use of present means: we shall rather wait with folded arms, in lazy apathy, for signs and wonders from heaven. A closer inquiry, however, will prove to us, that these assertions are groundless, and that no doctrine yields more powerful motives for devoted labour and Christian zeal.

And, first, let us view it solely in its personal aspect. The Gospel has in every age been exposed to that licentious abuse—"Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound." The freeness of the offered salvation may not only be perverted by unbelievers to their ruin, but by true Christians themselves to their grievous loss. They

may pride themselves on the fancied clearness of their views of the Gospel, till the severest warnings, and the most earnest exhortations of God's word fail to impress them, and are passed by as legal statements, with which they have nothing to do.

Now one most powerful antidote to this deadly evil, this palsy of the soul, is the hope of the first resurrection. Each doctrine of God's word is shielded from abuse by some truth which is its contrast. And such is the judgment of believers, according to their works, at the coming of Christ. To remove this into the far distance, is to destroy the main-spring of Christian diligence; to bring it near, is to present to the conscience the most stirring motive of devotedness and zeal. It is not merely that it tells us of a solemn separation near at hand, when one shall be taken and another left, and none but the true followers of Christ can stand in his presence. This doctrine goes farther still. It tells us plainly, that in the resurrection one star differeth from another star in glory. It shows us the martyrs, and those who have suffered in the cause of Christ, standing foremost in the blessed company of his followers. The words of our Lord, it reminds us, apply to the holy and the righteous, no less than to the filthy and the unjust: "My reward is with me, to render to

every man according as his work shall be." His righteousness as the Judge is not set aside by his grace as the Saviour, but is joined with it in the closest harmony; while he assigns to the thousands of his saints, according to their several faithfulness, the various degrees of recompense and of glory.

And say, my brethren, is not the near prospect of this judgment a powerful call to entire devotedness and unreserved obedience? Next to the dying love of Christ, what truth can be so fitted to quicken the faith and animate the zeal of God's servants? And although pure gratitude and zeal for the Divine glory, of all motives are doubtless the highest, and ought to be supreme in the heart; yet in times of backsliding and lukewarmness, this truth is the most suited of all to rouse the Christian from his trance, and to awaken him to renewed energy and laborious zeal. Yes, on that day, every one shall receive as his work hath been. Each star shall shine with its own separate brilliance. Those who have suffered or laboured much for Christ shall have the foremost seats in his kingdom.

Here, then, is a scope for the noblest ambition,—an ambition free from all stain of sin; for its prizes are all forfeited by selfishness and vainglory; humility and love can alone attain

them. Here, the cup of cold water given to a disciple shall be recompensed with draughts of living joy. Here, riches consecrated to Christ's service, shall be replaced by durable riches, the treasures of eternity. Each offering laid at the feet of Christ, shall in no wise lose its reward. Each various grace of the Christian believer in this life, shall be reflected in corresponding hues of light and glory in that kingdom of the Lord. And surely this truth, in near prospect, cannot fail to be a motive for redoubled zeal and devotedness. Surely it must teach the Christian to covet earnestly the best gifts; and to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, when he sees that the blessed recompense is so near at hand.

But this direct tendency of the doctrine, it will perhaps be rejoined, is more than balanced by its deadening effects on the collective hopes and missionary prospects of the Church. This prejudice is rooted so deeply in the minds of many Christians, that I must endeavour, though hastening to a close, to remove this stumbling-block out of their way.

Now, doubtless, if the word of God has revealed to us that the whole world will be converted by the preaching of the Gospel and the missionary labours of the Church, a denial of the promise

must be injurious. Error cannot have the effects of truth. And, in this case, the Church would be deprived of one important element in the real and lawful springs of missionary zeal. But if the word of God has never sanctioned this expectation, then to indulge a false and unscriptural hope must be equally injurious. Our first inquiry must be simply, what is the revealed truth of God? The most animating hopes, without this Divine warrant, will prove only a vain and perilous delusion.

But we may consent to abandon this high ground of Scripture testimony, and compare these two expectations, simply in themselves. The doctrine of the first resurrection, when seen in its true light, will be found the most animating, quickening, and glorious.

For wherein lies the real contrast? We believe alike, that God's work of redemption shall yet be complete, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. We are alike persuaded, that there is a large blessing promised, even now, to the preaching of the Gospel, and to every effort of Christian love. We are further led to expect, that at the time of the end, such labours will be signally prospered; that the latter rain of the Spirit shall begin to descend, and a vast number of converts be prepared for that great harvest at the coming of our Lord. Here only is the point

of divergence. While many think that the means now in use will of themselves complete the world's redemption, we believe that the ministers of Christ are only the heralds to prepare his way, and that the full triumph of Divine grace over man's rebellion will be in that great day when the Lord himself shall appear.

Now what will be the practical tendency of this difference? The immediate duty of Christian labour and missionary exertion continues the same. The motive in the assurance of present success, is the same also. The blessed privilege of turning sinners from the error of their ways, and saving many souls from death, is open to our prayers and labours on either view. Here only the practical contrast begins. The prospect of the first resurrection forbids the Church to rest on her own efforts, or to trust in the outward instruments she employs. It commands her not to sacrifice to her own net, nor to burn incense to her own drags, but to centre all her hopes around the person of the Saviour. No present success can now elate her with pride; she knows that the full triumph must visibly belong to the Lord alone. No seeming want of success can now discourage her; she sees behind her a mighty reserve of supernatural agency in the counsels of heaven, which shall vanquish every enemy, and

complete her triumph. She will not now be tempted, in a mechanical age, and amidst the bustle of her own labours, to turn the Gospel itself into a system of machinery, and to forget the mystery and the grandeur of things unseen and eternal. All the present stimulants to action and diligence she still retains. But there is infused into them a deeper feeling of majesty and holiness; there is thrown around them a sacred mantle of Divine glory. The meanest labours of her children in the service of Christ are now seen to be linked, in close and immediate union, with all the unutterable solemnity of that great day of the Lord's appearing.

And if we look beyond the present labours of the Church to the future season of her triumph, the practical excellence of this truth will still more plainly appear. No other view tends so powerfully to enlarge and ennoble the hopes of the Christian in the near prospect of the Millennial glory.

There is much, doubtless, in the hope of the Millennium, even in its popular form, which is most cheering and delightful to the Christian bosom. When we look back on the wars and violence which make up this world's history, how blessed a hope it is, that peace and righteousness shall yet prevail, and the name of Christ be honoured through all the earth! And when

we further anticipate a large and unwonted measure of holiness, in Churches of true believers, what more can the Christian desire, in his best hopes for this fallen and sinful world?

And yet, my brethren, there is fuller and higher hope in store for this earth, and the first resurrection opens it to our view. It was a blessed thing, when Joseph's brethren repented of their guilt, and said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother;" and when the heart of Joseph yearned towards them with a brother's tenderness. But it was a more blessed moment still, when the recognition was openly made, and when Joseph wept on the neck of his astonished brethren. And so, too, it is a joyful thought to look forward to the time when the nations shall repent of their vanities, and earth bear once more some resemblance of heaven. But far more joyful and glorious it is to believe, that the reconcilment shall be openly made, that heaven itself shall stoop down to earth; and that the Lord Jesus, in visible glory, shall welcome back the rebellious prodigal within the happy bounds of the unfallen universe. What can be more glorious than the hope that all the assembly of the faithful shall then be gathered unto their Lord, and wearing his Divine image, share in his holy dominion, and shed all the light and love of heaven upon the sojourners of this

lower world. The hope of the Millennium has thus a fulness, and breadth, and grandeur which no words can describe. The barrier of separation will be removed; the veil of the covering which sin had spread over the nations will be taken away. The stone will be rolled from this vast sepulchre of dying men; and the angels of God, those Divine remembrancers of the Church, shall once more hold visible fellowship with our ransomed earth. Our world will be no longer a rebel outcast, shut out by sin from all open communion with the sinless creation; but like a newborn infant, cradled in the arms of infinite loving-kindness, will be received, amidst the anthems of saints and angels, into the family of heaven.

What element, then, of animating hope, or of holy joy, is wanting to the prospect which this truth unfolds to us? What larger wish can even our imagination conceive? They are scenes which surpass fable, and yet, my brethren, they are true. The earth shall be redeemed from the fall. The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever and ever. From righteous Abel down to the believers of the present age, not one shall be absent from the blessed company. The glorious company of the apostles will be there. The goodly fellowship of the prophets will be there also. The noble army of martyrs, slain for

the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus—their cry will have ceased, and their prayer be answered, and they who have suffered with their Lord, shall reign with him in glory. The holy Church, of all the true servants of Christ in every land, shall be there also. Now separated, alas! not by distance only, but by the worse separation of mutual errors and sins—their errors will then have passed away like a dream, their contentions be exchanged for love, and their loud disputes for the louder songs of thanksgiving. Yes, and those who, like the Patriarch Israel, could not receive the good tidings, shall yet find them a blessed reality, and share themselves also in that first resurrection of all the people of God.

But that which crowns these hopes of the Church, and adds to them their noblest element, will be the visible presence of the Lord Jesus. "They lived and reigned with Christ." At the birth of our Lord, when the angel brought the tidings to the shepherds, it was the mention of the sign, "the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger," which awoke the song of praise in the celestial company. The Spirit of God here repeats the same lesson. It is not the exaltation of the martyrs, nor the thrones of judgment; no, it is the presence of Christ with his people, over which the Spirit

pronounces at once this glowing benediction. He seems to lead the Church through the whole course of God's former mercies, and through all the other elements of the millennial felicity, and then to say to her at the close,— "Thou shalt see greater things than these." One higher token remains of Divine goodness; one crowning proof of the Saviour's condescension. "Hereafter shall ye see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." It is with Christ that the children of the resurrection shall live and reign, and therefore blessed and holy must they be for ever!

And is it possible that He who is surrounded by the hosts of angels, should ever visit again this sinful world, save for one passing moment to destroy it for ever? Can it be, that amidst the immensity of his works, this mean planet should again be honoured with his presence? Yes, it is possible, and true also. He hath promised the daughter of Zion, "Lo, I come, and dwell in the midst of thee," saith the Lord. The name of the city which Ezekiel beheld is, Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his words shall not pass away. His sacred feet shall stand once more on the Mount of Olives; and Zion, which is now forsaken and desolate, shall yet hear his voice of love, saying

to her, "Arise, and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

And is not this to degrade the Lord of glory? Does not this contract his greatness and majesty within mean and unworthy bounds? O, no! for he is still the same Infinite One who issues the challenge to the universe. "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Far be it from our thoughts to make this earth his prison-house, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain: no, it will be only the footstool of his Divine Majesty. But this we believe, that according to his promise, He will make the place of his feet glorious by his own manifested presence. The manhood, the mystic heel of Emmanuel, which here below, on the cross, was bruised by the malice of Satan, shall be visibly revealed here on earth in the beauty of the resurrection, shall be the source of a world's blessedness, and the centre of its holy adoration. The times, the frequency, or the manner, in which the King of Israel shall appear to the nations upon earth, we are neither careful nor curious to explain. But the fact of his visible presence is distinctly revealed. The Holy Land, we are taught, will be the chosen theatre where that presence shall be displayed. "The Lord will create on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and on all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and the

shining of a flaming fire by night, for on all the glory shall be a defence." "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord."

But whatever be the nature or manner of this visible intercourse with the sojourners upon earth, the communion of the risen saints with their Lord shall be perpetual and unbroken. They shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. Corruption shall have put on incorruption, and their mortal shall have put on immortality. They shall have dominion over a ransomed earth; they shall be admitted freely to the palaces of heaven. The covenant of Abraham, sealed, as the Psalmist declares, to a thousand generations, shall be plentifully fulfilled. They shall be blessed, and their name shall be great, and they shall be a blessing. Every trial they have borne, every suffering they have endured, every temptation they have overcome, will only have accomplished the gracious design of their Lord, and fitted them for that royal priesthood, which they shall exercise through eternity over the new creation of God.

And now, my brethren, in closing this great subject, let me humbly commend the whole to your private and prayerful meditation. Search the Scriptures whether these things be so. And when you have gained, as you may gain, a full

conviction of their truth, O let us pray that these convictions may be endured with a transferring power. The Holy Spirit alone, who delights to magnify the grace of the Saviour, and to show us things to come, can apply the doctrine with a living energy to our souls. Let us seek for his gracious influence, that these hopes of the Church, built on the true sayings of God, may not pass away from us, like the empty visions of a dream. Let us rather adopt the words of that apostle, who had a glimpse of this coming kingdom on the holy mount: "Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

And while we meditate, with joy and reverence, on this blessed hope, let us never forget how inseparably the sufferings of Christ and the glory that shall follow, are blended together in the word of God. None shall be sharers in this kingdom, but those who have been purified by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, and have made their robes white in the atoning blood of the Lamb. See, then, that you build on this foundation alone. Quicksands there are without number, on which men may build to their soul's ruin; but these are not foundations; they will not endure in the day of trial: for other "foundation can no man lay,

than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus." It is the cross of our dying Saviour which alone can prepare us for the hour of his approaching judgments. Learn a lesson, then, of Divine wisdom, from the great apostle; and when you come by faith to the foot of the mount, to anticipate the hope of the resurrection, and gaze on the general assembly of the first-born, O let your eye rest upon Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Yet, even while you gaze on the cross, forget not that wonderful inscription which it bears, full of joy, and hope, and the promise of good things to come—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel." In that one short title alone, what a rich treasury of hope is contained for our fallen world! When the King of Israel shall himself appear in his beauty, and according to his promise, the angels of God shall be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man; then, and not till then, will the promise of the first resurrection be felt and known in the immeasurable vastness of the love which it reveals. Then, and then only, will it be seen how truly blessed and holy are those ransomed children of God. Meanwhile let our hearts and our hopes be fixed, with earnest desire,

on that coming kingdom. May God himself enable us, every one, to renew, with a deeper fervency of supplication, the prayer we have already offered—"We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so, by his cross and passion, we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord." "Now, unto him that is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; to him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

NOTE A.

A different view of the passage (Matthew xxv. 31—46) has been adopted by several advocates of the Pre-millennial Advent, and one more remote from the common interpretation, referring it to the judgment of living nations before the millennium begins. This place is not suited for the full discussion of the subject. The view, however, here taken, has been deliberately preferred. There are three decisive objections to the other view. First, the judgment of the living has been described in the previous parables. Secondly, the nations not included in the Church are not all gathered together at the opening of the millennium. (Isaiah lxvi.)

And, thirdly, the sentence on the wicked is plainly the sentence, not of present death, but of everlasting judgment, which follows the close of the millennium. And, besides, from the evident climax, no other interpretation answers to the majesty and grandeur of this impressive description. Accordingly the Church has universally applied it to the decision of the final state of mankind.

LECTURE VIII.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER DALLAS, M.A.,

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2 TIMOTHY IV. 1.

*“ Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the quick and the dead
at his appearing and his kingdom.”*

MATT. XXV. 31.

*“ When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and
all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon
the throne of his glory.”*

PERHAPS it is impossible for any human being to stand in a more responsible, and it may be said indeed a more awful position, than when he is commissioned to preach the Gospel, “which is able to save the soul,” and which must be “a sweet savour of Christ” whenever it is delivered, “the savour of life unto life” in some, and “the savour

of death unto death" in others. And if this be the case when preaching the Gospel in ordinary circumstances, what should be the degree of solemnity impressed on the mind when one of the ministers of Christ is specially engaged, in his providence, to stand up and open the most wonderful of the pages of that Gospel,—wonderful in every respect; wonderful as regards the communication of it to us poor sinners; wonderful as regards the details of it; wonderful in the eyes of the angels, who, as they are reading chapter after chapter of the marvellous history of the wisdom of God, learnt through the Church, are led on to contemplate the great climax of their wonder, when they shall see all things clustering to one point at the judgment of the quick and the coming of the Lord in his glory; but most wonderful when taken in connexion with the subjects for judgment, poor lost sinners, necessarily and naturally condemned, and yet saved through the great atonement: for though the saints will be the subjects of a judgment then, yet certainly "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!" Here is the height of the wonder of this most wonderful subject.

Under this solemn impression I stand here at this time; and I confess that I feel also exceedingly burdened with a sense of the much which it will be

needful to say, and the little capacity, from time and circumstances, for bringing the subject before you. There is one comfort under the sense of this burden, derived from the recollection that my subject is not a matter of deduction from reasoning; nor one in which I am to base my statements upon the arguments of the human mind; but it is a matter of simple revelation. I need say nothing connected with it but that which God has been pleased to reveal; and if I do but touch upon a few of the points which may suggest thoughts that open upon the mind that light which God pours in through his own Word, it is in the confidence that you will go home and search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so, and be helped in the application of passage after passage, so as the more easily to trace out, each for himself, the wonderful windings of the subject which is now before us. It is only under the power of the Holy Spirit that I can enter upon this task; and it is only under the power of the Holy Spirit that you can attend to it profitably. May that Holy Spirit, who is assuredly present in the midst of us, even the Spirit of Christ, mercifully condescend at this time to take of the things of Christ belonging to this especial subject, and show them to our minds! May that Holy Spirit open the heart of every one present, and make them receive the Word profitably, to their

own edification and to the glory of the Lord ! May God, for Christ's sake, at this time give to each of us the Holy Spirit !

The subject before us leads us to inquire into the scriptural statements respecting the judgment of the living. This is a very large subject in itself under whatever limits we bring it, and it is necessary to limit it by definitions. Perhaps there is not a word in the whole Scripture more equivocal in its use than the word "judgment." I do not purpose to make use of this word in the sense in which God's great acts of wrath have been, are, and will be poured out upon the wicked in the world at different times ; such as the act of God's judgment by the flood, or by the destruction of Sodom, or by the destruction of Jerusalem, or by similar acts which shall happen hereafter. These judgments of the Lord are not what we are about to speak of. Neither do I take the word "judgment" in the sense of that continuous state of rule which the Spirit has sometimes employed it to express ; and by which, when it is so employed with respect to the Lord's kingdom, is meant his reigning or judging, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords," upon the earth. It is not in these senses, but strictly in a forensic sense, technically a "judgment;" that is to say, the act of judging by calling to account, and entering into a judicial

examination upon a great and solemn occasion. Judgments of this kind, we are led from many parts of Scripture to know, must take place; it is in this sense of the word that we are now to consider what we are taught in Scripture respecting the judgment on those persons who, at the time of the coming of the Lord, shall be found alive upon the earth—"the quick."

While this is the definition of the proposed subject, it will not be proper to consider it as contradistinguished from the judgment of the dead; for that would not convey a correct notion of the antithesis intended; but as contradistinguished from another judgment, to which the Scripture bids us look forward as occurring at another period. This other judgment relates, indeed, *only* to "the dead;" but that we are now to consider does not relate *only* to the living. The text distinctly states, that Christ at his appearing shall judge the quick and the dead; and here "the quick" and "the dead" are so mentioned that they must be taken, to mean some of each at the same judgment. There will be, therefore, one judgment to some who shall be alive at his coming, with some who shall be dead at his coming. As this is to include some who are quick and some who are dead at his appearing, we must inquire where we shall find an account of the resurrection of those dead. In the twentieth

chapter of the Revelation we have the whole subject of the two resurrections condensed. There is to be a "first resurrection;" and all who are raised at the first resurrection are said to be "blessed and holy." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." (Ver. 6.) But whilst we are distinctly told of this as a "first resurrection," so distinguished, we are further told that "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." (Ver. 5.) Here we have, therefore, a division of the whole number of the dead into two parts. Some of the dead are to arise at a resurrection which is called *the first*. None rise, therefore, *before* these, and all who rise then are "blessed and holy." Then "*the rest of the dead*," that is, all the remainder, are not to rise again for a thousand years. At the end of this thousand years the statement of a judgment is very distinctly and plainly set forth. (Rev. xx. 11—15.) "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead;" and then these dead are described to be the great and the small out of the sea, out of the earth, out of Hades, and all death collectively. All are then to be raised up, to stand for judgment. A number of *books* are opened; and this is contrasted with the opening of a single

book ; and while it is stated that the dead are judged, every man out of those *books*, according to his works, the opening of the other *book* is for another purpose altogether. It is not used to call up to judgment any individual whose name is written therein ; but it is employed simply as a testimony to establish the perfect justice of the sentence on the others ; to manifest that not one of those who will then be judged had his name written in the book of life. As the solemn tribunal is sitting for the judging of "the rest of the dead," we may suppose that there will be a reference to this book ; and as each individual is accused, we may imagine the question to be asked, "Is his name in the book of life?" "Is there any escape for him?" "No ; it is not found there," will be the answer. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." This is all which can be grounded upon the mention of this book of life in this awful passage of God's Word. All the dead whose names were written in the book of life will have been raised a thousand years before this, and not one shall perish, or be again judged ; while all the remaining dead shall be raised afterwards to a judgment at which none shall be saved. Our Lord himself classifies these two resurrections, one as "the resurrection of life," and the other as "the resurrection of damnation." (John v. 29.)

I have considered it necessary thus to establish, distinctly and scripturally, the anticipation of two resurrections; one of which is to bring on the judgment at the great tribunal on persons all of whom have been dead, while the other is in preparation for the judgment spoken of in the text and in other places, as the judgment of "the quick and the dead." This judgment (which, in this respect, will be of a twofold character, some being "quick" and some "dead") is to be at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "first resurrection," at the beginning of the thousand years; while the other judgment is to take place at the end of the thousand years. Now it is the former judgment of which we are to inquire. The great points for us to consider are, Who are to be the subjects of this judgment; and what are the circumstances connected with it, so far as we are able to find them in the Holy Scriptures.

Before we proceed, it will be important to store up two remarks in the mind. The one refers to the necessity for adhering strictly to the principles of the interpretation of Scripture which we are to adopt in searching into this subject. I will not pause, even for one moment, to advocate the literal principle of interpretation which we follow. I take it for granted that its soundness has been already established in previous portions of this

course of Lectures, as distinguished from the *figurative* mode of interpretation. I use the word *figurative* emphatically, in order to call attention to the fact, that the literal interpretation of the Scripture is not to be opposed to the *spiritual*. We all acknowledge that Scripture should have a spiritual interpretation; there is not a passage into which the Spirit may not compress a second meaning. We ought not, therefore, to make use of the word "literal" as contradistinguished from "spiritual," but as contradistinguished from "figurative." But there is one point connected with the subject which is not generally attended to: the habit of our minds is to fill up the outline statements of Scripture with inferential additions, suggesting themselves according to our notions, as, *of course*, in connexion with the main features before us; and whether it be the literal, or whether it be the figurative interpretation which we adopt, a great many of these inferential additions find their way into our minds. We take it for granted that *this* must follow when *that* occurs; and in this way we seem to escape some difficulties, while in reality we create many more. The right way is to take the Scripture just as we find it, and when we come to a difficulty, to oppose our faith to it. Have we a grammatical passage literally and plainly stating any point? Yes; but

it is wonderful, and not consistent with our accustomed notions. God is wonderful. It is true if God has said it, whatever our notions may be on the subject; and if the Lord will but pour down the Spirit to enable us to believe, all the difficulties fall before our faith.

The second remark which I would store up in your minds is, that we are accustomed to consider the advent of the Lord as the event of one day. As we take it in at one thought, we are in the habit of looking forward to it as though it were one undivided act. There are a great many events which are spoken of historically in the same way, but we shall find, that though they are mentioned merely as one great act, yet the development of each consisted of various acts in detail, occupying a considerable portion of time. When we speak of the invasion of the Conqueror, we speak of it as one event, it conveys one thought; yet it was a long campaign. When we talk of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, we condense it into one thought; yet it consisted of a long course of events. So, also, when we talk of the advent of our Lord, we should remember, that though it will be one great crisis to the world, yet it is to be developed in the same way as other great historical and prophetic events; and though it has not pleased God to give us any systematic detailed

plan of all that will then take place, yet it has pleased him to give us considerable information on many points. By putting all these together with such consistency as the nature of the events will guide us in observing, we may come at the knowledge of much that will occur in connexion with the great crisis of the world at the epiphany of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The main subject for our consideration, "the judgment of the quick and the dead," is expressly stated in the text to take place "at the appearing and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." We must begin, therefore, by inquiring into the circumstances of that great event. In the prophecy upon the Mount, our Lord himself tells us, that a time shall come when Jerusalem shall cease to "be trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24), and, also, that "immediately after the tribulation" upon the Jews (which shall terminate when a Jewish supremacy shall put an end to Gentile dominion in Jerusalem) great astronomical derangements shall take place, and "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.) This "sign of the Son of man in heaven" is described by St. Luke as "the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke xxi. 27), as was promised by the angels at the ascension,—"This same Jesus, which is taken up

from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts i. 11.) Our Lord adds, that he will then "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." For some additional particulars we must look to the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, where the apostle, intending to comfort Christians with the assurance that they, whether the quick or the dead, will meet their friends departed in Christ at the coming of the Lord, says, at the thirteenth verse, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," that is, with Jesus. But, as if the thought occurred, How is he to get them from their graves? the apostle (having instructed the Church that this vile body must be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body) proceeds to state how it is that God will gather the saints in order to bring them with Jesus, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself" (that is, himself alone as a man) "shall descend from

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then," says the apostle, "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This, then, is the way in which God will gather his elect, in order that he may bring them with Jesus, and when they are thus gathered, they will "ever be with the Lord." When, therefore, this cloud shall *come down* near the earth, for "the Lord himself shall *descend* from heaven," and when it shall hover over the earth, yet high enough to make it true that the saints "shall be *caught up* to meet the Lord in the air," both the first resurrection and the first judgment must take place. Pause for a moment and consider, shall we be there? This is the solemn and all important consideration for each, and that which makes the subject really an important one. May God of his infinite mercy fasten that consideration upon all our hearts, remembering the statement of our Lord, that of those who have made the same profession, and been occupied about the same employments, "one shall be taken and another left;" "two men shall be in the field, two women at the mill, one shall be taken, another left;" which of us, if

we be living, would be taken, and which left on earth with the Lord's enemies?

Having traced these circumstances in connexion with the glorious advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must proceed to examine to what part of this great event the judgment of "the quick and the dead at his appearing" belongs.

To do this, it will be necessary to inquire, *who* are then to be judged? This has been considered to be a difficult question. In the fifth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians there is a very distinct statement made to the Corinthian Christians, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Also in the fourteenth chapter of Romans and the tenth verse there is a similar statement, with a special reference to the brethren. St. Paul says, addressing a Christian brother, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? . . . for we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." So that it distinctly appears that there is to be a judgment referring to the saints, and that according to works. In other parts of Scripture we find it written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to

do them;" and in connexion with this, we read, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 10, 13.) Then we find again, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.) And again, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1); and, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) Numberless other passages contain this essential doctrine of the Gospel of salvation, and there is nothing in them really at variance from the doctrine of the text. "There is *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus," for Jesus has given himself to be a "curse for us." He has moreover sent forth his Spirit to apply this truth with power to the hearts of his people, and thus to convert his own elect out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; he has borne their *condemnation*, and not one of their sins shall be mentioned to them. But neither is it said that there shall be any judgment of their *sins*; their *persons* have been judged for sin and the penalty paid on the cross; a new motive and a new power has been given to them in conveying to them the saving knowledge of the atonement there

accomplished; and with that motive, and under that power, they have set forth to serve the Lord their Saviour, who will come and reckon with them concerning the *works* performed in that service, for which purpose we must all stand before Christ's judgment-seat.

In order to ascertain the particular circumstances which have been revealed respecting this judgment, we must refer to the answer given by our Lord to the question put to him by the four disciples as he sat upon the Mount of Olives. They had asked him, "When shall the destruction of the temple be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. xxiv. 3.) The Lord immediately entered largely into the subject. He first rectified the mistakes into which they were falling respecting the destruction of Jerusalem; and then he gave that prophetic account of his Epiphany which is found in the end of the twenty-fourth and the whole of the twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew. After having shown what would be the signs in the heavens,—the appearance of the Son of man in heaven—the general and sudden gathering of his elect people from every quarter—the general state of the world—the unpreparedness of the people and their incredulity as to the crisis at hand; and specially warning those ministers who shall be

forgetful of the coming of the Lord, saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" he says, "Then"—at the time of the approach of the Lord's advent—at the period of the crisis, "then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." (Matt. xxv. 1—13.)

The kingdom of heaven—the condition of the

Church just before the Lord's coming—is here compared to that of ten bridesmaids preparing for a wedding. Half of these are wise, and half are foolish. All have their lamps. The bridesmaids are the different classes of professors; and the lamp is their profession,—that which we made just now when we repeated an orthodox creed, making confession of the truth. But some of these had nothing but the light of their profession; whilst others had the source of true light, the unction from on high—the Holy Ghost. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” As the point of the parable is, that the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom, this shows that the doctrine concerning the Lord's advent is for a time to be practically forgotten. Not that professing Christians will have renounced their expecting position; for the expectation of the Lord's coming must always be declared in the creed; but the Church upon the whole is to be satisfied with the acknowledgment of this truth in a verbal profession, while as to the power and symmetry of the doctrine they will slumber and sleep. At midnight, just before the Lord's arrival, there is to be a shout, “Get ready to meet him!” And then, when men's hearts are failing them for fear,—when signs shall be seen in the heavens,—and above all that bright cloud which bears the Son of man;—then, as the bridegroom approaches, men shall earnestly manifest a

desire to be at last, what true Christians are at first; they will try to get the oil as though it were a sort of common stock; as though in saying, "Give us of your oil," were expressed the notion, "I am a member of the Church, and the Church contains certainly the true people of God; I have been baptized, and claim, by right of external union with the body, a share of the spirituality which some possess, that, as a member of the Church, I may be saved." But the truly unctuous ones will stand forth and protest against this doctrine: they will answer, "There is no power of communicating grace upon the principle of a joint-stock. At best, such a doctrine would rest upon the unscriptural hope of a ritual salvation, which would assuredly fail. Each for himself must obtain the oil; nothing will save but the Holy Ghost, personally applied from on high, and personally retained to keep alight the lamp of a true profession of faith; seek it where alone it is to be found." And then will a number of professors be endeavouring, when too late, to remedy their original mistake; too late, alas! for in the midst of these attempts the Lord himself shall appear, and they that are ready go in with him to the marriage.

In this parable we have a figurative description of the Lord's coming; and we have had before a literal one. The literal account says, "The

trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the living) shall be changed." These quick and dead saints shall go in with him to the marriage; one shall be taken, another left; the foolish virgins shall be left. How shall those much-professors and merit-workers, those who have been seeking for salvation by the sweat of their brow, be disappointed? The foolish virgins do not go in; the door will be shut when *they* come to enter; they will cry with prayers, such as they had never put up before, "Lord, Lord, open to us." "I know you not," says the Lord: the door is shut.

But our blessed Lord did not leave the subject here. Having finished that parable, he commenced another to carry on the same important information, and to enlarge upon the very point we are considering—the judgment then to take place.

"For the kingdom of heaven" (this should rather be "the Son of man," which is distinctly the sense of the Greek) "is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And

likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." (Matt. xxv. 14—19.) In this parable, "his own servants" represent the ten virgins of the former one, and enlarged instruction is afforded us. We learn, especially, that when "the Lord of those servants cometh," he "reckoneth with them." We know that the Lord will come in the clouds; we know that he will call his saints, the quick and the dead; we know that the professors who have lamps with no oil in them will be left out; and now, in this parable, connected as it is with the other, we find that the Lord reckoneth with "his own servants." We proceed to the result of the reckoning, "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord

said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. xxv. 20—23.) Both these happy individuals received the same answer: "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Look now again at 1 Thess. iv. 17, in which is found the literal key to this figurative statement; this tells us, "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The parable expresses this by the words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord:" so that we have the judgment upon the works (not the persons) of the saints—the reckoning with them to account for their talents, occurring at the time of the appearing of Christ in the clouds, which may thus be considered his judgment-seat before which we Christians must all appear.

There is one talent which is given to every professor of Gospel truth. It is the knowledge of the truth;—the privilege of being joined outwardly to the visible Church by baptism, with the confession by a creed which is sound and orthodox, is one talent. Besides this, those who have the unction from on high are gifted with other talents, which they go forth and employ for God's glory. But he who has nothing but the

lamp without the supply of oil, nothing but that one talent his profession, goes forth into the world, and does not act upon his profession to the glory of God. Look at the motive which he pleads in the reckoning time:—"I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed." This is the motive of the law, not of the Gospel; the motive of the strictness of the law's requirements, even from an incompetent fallen man. The professor who tells out the Gospel with his lips, yet feels not its power, its life in his heart; who strives to work out his own salvation, not knowing that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; who calculating the weight of this good act, and the lightness of that sin, casts them together and acts under the motive of the law—such a one finds it a very hard thing to be a Christian, and thinks that God is a hard master;—that the morality of the Gospel is unattainably strict. His language is, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent: I walked about the world, and nobody would have known me to be more of a Christian than the world themselves. I might be seen with the worldly unbeliever, with the professor of this error and of

that, and no one would have discerned the difference. I hid my talent in the world;" and then, as the Lord had said in the former parable, "I know thee not," so he says in this parable, "Wicked and slothful servant! you knew that I was your Master, you took me to be a hard master; yet, though you made a profession that you were my servant, you did not strive to gain me an interest of glory upon that profession." Then he pronounces the sentence against him, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." The contrast is strongly stated between the result to this, and to the former classes of the Lord's own servants: to them the word was—"Enter in;" to these, Be ye "*cast out*" of the light into darkness.

Here, then, we have a description of a judgment upon different persons; it includes the saints, they who are elect; who are saved; who are in Christ, and "*no condemnation*" can pass upon them, for their condemnation has passed upon Jesus, and they know it; they are taken out of the influence of the law-motive; they are placed under the power of the Gospel-motive; the Holy Ghost is given to them; the unction has abided on them, and they obey the command, "Work; occupy, till I come." Hence that earnest diligence; hence all that constant striving to put down the evil of sin in them; hence all that crucifying of the flesh with

the affections and lusts thereof; hence all that bright shining in the midst of the world. And when the Lord comes and opens the cloud, he will say to each one to whom he has given these various talents over and above the knowledge and profession of the truth, "Well done, good and faithful servant;"—thou hast employed thy talents for my glory;—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

When the foolish professor comes, the man who has done nothing with his one talent, the unregenerate, though baptized man, he was but the dead-weight upon the Church; he was but the portrait of a Christian, which had nothing to do with the reality of Christian life; he was not included in the book of life; and he will stand outside of the door when it shall be shut. What a fearful prospect for him who has so lived amongst his neighbours and friends, as that no one could tell whether he were indeed one of the "peculiar people" which Christ came to redeem unto himself; a people, not *of* the world while they were *in* the world.

This is the judgment of the quick, which, being the first judgment, embraces a portion of the dead in order that it may include all the saints. Though this part of the subject is far from being exhausted,—far even from being opened as would be desirable,

yet time will not admit of more, as there remains another point to be considered as coming under the appellation of "the judgment of the living." In immediate connexion with the statement made by our Lord Jesus Christ of the judgment upon the works of the saints at the time of his return to the earth, conveyed in the two parables already referred to, he gives an account of another solemn scene which must be looked upon as a "judgment of the living," in whatever manner his words be interpreted. It should be remembered, that the whole of the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, as well as the twenty-fourth, was delivered as Christ's answer to the question, "When shall the destruction of Jerusalem be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" After rectifying the disciples' mistakes about the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus replied to the main point of the question by explaining what he thought fit as to His "coming and the end of the age." Having stated the judgment which is to take place upon the works of the saints at the time of his admitting them into his glory when he comes in the cloud, he goes on thus, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them

one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or

sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 31—46.)

In order to understand this passage, which is emphatically descriptive of a "judgment of the living," it will be necessary to occupy your time for a few moments in endeavouring, as briefly as possible, to make a condensed preparatory statement of the scheme which may be gathered from Scripture, so far as we may venture to state it, of the whole purpose of God in connexion with this judgment. In doing this, I would entreat you not to suppose that I would put forth with dogmatical certainty, the interpretation which I only suggest for prayerful consideration, under the sense of its truth which has been the result of a long contemplation of it by my own mind.

One very important point, which is but too little considered, will tend to assist the symmetrical arrangement of the events connected with this subject. Our minds are apt to be engrossed by the world's recorded history, as though it were the *all* of its existence; yet the whole detail of that history will not occupy more than a period of about 7,000 years. Who is here that is sixty or seventy

years old? Let him look back at some important crisis of his life: it happened all in a day, or a week; yet it affected the whole course of its current. That week of seven days, it was nothing; it bore no proportion to the whole life; so short was the time it occupied. The history of this world's life, so far as we are informed of it, is just as a week—7,000 years, which is as a mere speck in its whole existence. Before Adam was, there was an eternity, during which the world was not; and after the period to which we are brought at the end of the book of the Revelation there will be an eternity, during which the world *will be*; for God has distinctly declared, that he has made the world to be inhabited. In the forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah (eighteenth verse) we read, "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the LORD, and there is none else." Now, upon that text a great deal depends. God made Adam, and the earth was the kingdom which he made for him. He said, "Have dominion over all the works of my hands." This grant of dominion was repeated to Noah; it was re-stated through David (Ps. viii.); it was pleaded by the Apostle to the Hebrews (Heb. ii.);—the absolute sovereignty which God had given to man, his dominion over the earth.

Of all the events which took place before the creation of the earth for man, we are informed but of one. There was a rebellion in heaven; an archangel and a multitude of angels fell from their first state. We are not told any part of their history except what relates to ourselves; which is briefly this; that, from some cause or other, these angels looked with hatred on the new created being, man; and to show their malice towards the Almighty Jehovah, they attempted to introduce sin into the world, and were permitted, for a season, to mar the lovely work that God had made in and for man. Now, he who made the world and man, might, if he judged right, annihilate the world, or to do with it as he might please; but if there be any power existing, which, by pressure from without, could force a certain course of conduct on the Almighty, contrary to his own expressed determination, then he could not say, "I am Jehovah; and there is none else." He is not the Almighty. If Satan prevail to make it a matter of absolute necessity that the world should *not* be inhabited, though Jehovah declares that he made it not in vain, but that he made it to be inhabited, it follows necessarily, that Satan is above God; there is a power greater than Jehovah's which forces him from his purpose. But that can never be: Satan is not God, though the world love to make him

their God; therefore, the world shall be inhabited by the sons of man, as God intended.

In order to restore the world exactly to what God made it, to what we find it in the second chapter of Genesis, and to make it what it shall be found millions of years hence,—inhabited by the children of Adam, good men, very good, as he made their father, and granted to man the sovereignty over his works,—it pleased him to pay an enormous price; he gave his own Son to save the world, and to restore all things on the earth. Now this was a sacrifice infinitely greater than the amount of good to be attained by the restoration of the children of Adam as Adam was made on the earth at the beginning. It was capable of yielding a much larger harvest of glory than would result merely from “the *restitution* of all things.” While therefore the atonement attained this object, it pleased God to superadd in its results objects of infinitely higher glory. He has determined that there shall be a new being, higher than all angels, next to himself; and in order to raise that new being out of the family of man, his own Son, equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead, inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood, gathers up with him in the manhood a selected number of the sons of Adam, chosen for the purpose of forming in the heavens an eternal memorial of his glory in

the atonement:—men in the glorified body which Christ himself takes and all his saints with him. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual glorified body such as the man Christ Jesus possesses at this moment; and *our* vile body must be fashioned like unto his glorified body. But who are these persons? The true Church,—the chosen ones out of the family of Adam, a pre-determined fore-appointed people out of every nation upon earth. A number which we know not; God has registered the name of each in the Lamb's book of life. These, in God's time, shall constitute the eternal memorial and testimony of the great atonement of Christ, and the great victory over Satan, which shall be established in the heavens.

But the earth must have its testimony too; and therefore it pleased the Lord, in renewing the world, and setting it up again in the state in which we find from the beginning it was intended to exist, to superadd a memorial of Christ's glory *on* that earth, by choosing a nation to whom he will not give the glorified bodies which distinguish the heavenly memorial, but who shall be distinguished upon earth by the peculiar glory, that every one of their bodies should be temples of the Holy Ghost; each individual of the nation shall be holy, sanctified by the fulness of that Spirit which now

separates the saints from other men in preparation for their glorified state. The family and kindred out of which the Son of God has taken flesh shall be this holy people upon the earth, for a memorial of Christ's glory amongst the other restored generations of the sons of Adam, whom we find, in the last state of the earth, spoken of as "the nations of them that are saved" (more properly, the saved Gentiles) "and the kings of the earth;" that is, those who have dominion over the works of God's hands. (Rev. xxi. 24; Heb. ii. 7.)

Time must pass to develop the human materials for these glorious works. There must be a chosen family; they must grow up to be a nation, and so time for a few generations was required. In the rearing of this nation they continually manifested the inveteracy of sin; yet did God tolerate them; till at last, in the fulness of time the Christ was born. Then began the dispensation of the kingdom, during which God gathers the subjects of the heavenly memorial of glory; during which he converts his elect from all nations; and not wanting the Jews again till he shall have gathered his other materials for the whole plan, he occupies the time in manifesting his displeasure against sin by pouring his wrath publicly on the Jews: he sends them amongst the Gentiles to be punished for their sins, and that punishment goes

on whilst he is gathering his elect out of every kindred, tongue, and people. During this time their position may be illustrated by a gas-lamp, the present purpose of which is fulfilled, but it will again be needed by-and-by; therefore its light is turned down, and it remains glimmering until it is wanted again; then the Master will turn up the screw, and it will give its blaze of light. The Jews, for a certain time, were the bright light on the earth: God has brought low their brightness, yet not extinguished the flame; they are a glimmering lamp,—a nation still, but giving no light; exhibiting a spectacle of God's fearful judgments against sin, but not cut off altogether. When God requires them again, the screw of the lamp will be turned up, and then will that people brighten again into a glorious nation. In the meanwhile, God is gathering a people out of every nation under heaven; and when he has accomplished the number of his elect, then the Saviour will return and bind Satan, who has been permitted to be at large during the period necessary for the growth of the materials with which the memorials of Christ's glory are to be established. This delay is the opportunity of Satan, during which he goes about ensnaring the children of men. And even in this work he will be accomplishing only another memorial, a third testimony

of the glory of Christ in the atonement;—an eternal memorial in hell. In the place prepared for the devil and his angels, *men* will be foreigners, and their presence will be a memento of Christ's victory and Satan's defeat. There they will be the testimony for God, that Satan tried to mar his work and could not; there they will remain his prisoners, to put him in mind that the only result of his invasion of man's dominion on the earth was that God got him more glory from the attempt. When, therefore, some of the elect nation shall have supremacy again in Jerusalem, and the elect saints shall have been gathered to be ever with the Lord, then will arise the necessity for a people with which to re-stock the earth. As in the case of the destruction of the world by the flood, it was necessary to restore the family of Adam, and Noah found favour in God's sight; he took him with his wife, and his sons with their wives, and by them began afresh to people the earth; so, when God shall have accomplished the number of his elect, and hastened his kingdom,—when the Jews, as the elect nation, shall be at Jerusalem, and Satan shall be bound, the three great memorials of the glory of the Saviour will have been established;—one in heaven, one on earth, and one in hell:—then will it be time to settle the fruits of Christ's victory in the restitution of all things as

at first;—and then will he take a new stock from the residue of men, to be “the kings of the earth,” as Adam was,—the nations (or Gentiles) saved. So, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him;” at that very time, having already gathered every one of the elect saints who will have entered into the cloud, the Lord Jesus, having just explained how at that same crisis he had already called them to himself, saying, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” to all his own servants;—then shall he “sit upon the throne of his glory.” If we refer to the third chapter of the Revelation (verse 21), we find, that “To him that overcometh Christ will grant to sit with him in his throne.” Having seen how the saints have entered into his joy, we next find the Lord Jesus sitting “upon the throne of his glory,” and, therefore, in realizing the glorious scene, we are to understand that the saints who are to share the throne of their Lord, will then be sitting in his throne with him. “And before him shall be gathered all nations.” In the Greek, that which is translated in this place “all nations,” is *παντα τα εθνη*. This word is more usually translated “Gentiles.”* “And before him shall

* It occurs 164 times in the New Testament, and is rendered 93 times by “Gentiles,” 64 times by “nations,” 5 times by “Heathen,” and twice by “people.”

be gathered" *παντα τα εθνη* "all the Gentiles." It has been customary, by the interposition of an unwarranted inference, to make the large assumption of a general resurrection upon this occasion; but this is an inferential addition which nothing in the passage seems to justify. Why should we presume to say that there will be such a resurrection when there is not one word about it? The words are very express, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory," then there shall be gathered before him all the Gentiles,—all the remaining people then living not previously disposed of in some way or other. We have had an account before of the true Church, the elect; they were gathered, and we may see them sitting with him on the throne of his glory: the lost professors were cast out: from other parts of Scripture we may know that the Jews shall be again at Jerusalem, and converted, "every one holy:" the infidel Antichrist and his armies will have been destroyed; "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision:" the apostate Church of Rome will have received its doom in the accomplishment of God's purpose of wrath. All these are accounted for. But we have not yet had any destination assigned to the living generation of Gentiles, the people who are left upon the earth, who "have not heard God's fame, neither have seen his glory." Here the Lord

gives us the account of them; and tells us how he takes from them the stock with which he begins the new generation of kings for the restored earth.

Having thus gathered all the Gentiles, he shall separate them. Then he shall say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." And here we find that the act is one of grace. There is no salvation but by grace; and when these Gentiles are put upon the right hand and stated to be blessed of God, it is as our Lord had before said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" so here he says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" that is, inherit the dominion intended for the children of Adam when the earth was made, which none of his children have yet entered upon, but which you, in this last generation, have been chosen to possess—the sovereignty described in the first chapter of Genesis, "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Gen. i. 26—28; Psalm viii. 6—8; Heb. ii. 5—9; Rev. xxi. 24.) Then comes the statement of the distinction by which the Lord shall have made his grace to appear in those whom he shall

separate for this purpose. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 35—40.) The way in which this passage is generally understood, is by supposing that the persons before the Lord are Christians, and that they say, "When saw we thee in need, and ministered unto thee?" out of mere humility. The form of the speech precludes the possibility of this interpretation being satisfactory. It implies ignorance—it asks for information; and our Lord addresses his reply to this inquiry, and not to the supposed existence of humility as its motive. If the subjects addressed are Christians, it is impossible to imagine that there could be any want of knowledge on the point. That could not be supposed of any Christian in the present state.

Could any one of us at this moment, if the Lord were to address us in similar language, say, that we were not aware that those good works which had been done to some poor Christian would be considered as done to the Lord himself? But if these words were addressed to some inhabitant of China or Japan, amongst whose countrymen a missionary had gone in the last days, and met persecution, but this individual had felt constrained to succour him, to give him drink, food, and clothing; to receive him, though a foreigner, and to tend him in his distress; then we may understand that, when afterwards the Lord should sit on his bright throne, surrounded by multitudes of his saints on the same throne, and with the holy angels hovering around him as his guards, he might address this individual in the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is intelligible and consistent, that, speaking to the astonished Gentile, and pointing to the glorified body of the very missionary whom he had succoured, and who would then be sitting on the Lord's throne beside him, that Lord might inform him for the first time, that what had been done to "this my brother," "one of the least of these my brethren," he would consider as done to himself. "There you see that poor missionary; you can hardly recognise him now: then he was

a stranger, ill treated by the Heathen, but you ministered to him: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto him, ye did it unto me.'"

Then he turns to the other side, and the picture is reversed. He says to those who did not put forth a hand to help the Christians, "You did not give me food when I was hungry." "When, Lord?" is the question still. "When did we neglect to assist thee?" And the answer is the same, "You did not minister to the poor missionary who was killed by the barbarous amongst your countrymen, you therefore did not minister to me. I take his case as my own, Depart, depart into everlasting fire." These are lost, condemned, but the others who were set apart by the grace of God to receive the kingdom which has been prepared for them from the creation of the earth, they are the new stock of the generation of Adam, whom he will educate for a thousand years, without the influence of the devil to counteract the effect of a dispensation of sight. The millennial period seems the period for the education of the new stock of mankind for the restored earth without the interference of Satan. And then at the end of that time there will be a last sifting to secure what that education has done for them. Satan shall be let loose once more for a little season; he shall separate the chaff from the wheat amongst the Gentiles; and final perdition

shall attend all who are manifested as retaining any taint of the corrupt nature. Meanwhile Jerusalem shall be the joy and light of the earth; and the Jews—the kindred of the man Jesus, the Son of God made man, these shall all be holy,—men and women, going on from generation to generation, and in each generation a Christian, spiritual, converted people: while, as to the glorified members of the Church, wherever the Lord Jesus is, there his saints shall be. Is he at the right hand of the Father? they will be with him. Does he come down to hold his court at Jerusalem, at the feast of tabernacles? there they will be with him, for they shall “ever be with the Lord.”

In endeavouring to carry the mind through this great subject, I have felt greatly embarrassed from a sense of the much that I have left unsaid. In condensing the matter before us, I have striven to say only just enough to convey a coherent arrangement of the steps by which we are led to discover the circumstances of the judgment of the living, and every solemn act which partakes of that character. If it please God to prosper these words, so as to make them the occasion of exciting to a diligent search into the Scriptures, then you will find much more of the subject than is ordinarily imagined. But whether it be so or not, let me not lose the opportunity of pressing upon you the practical

consideration, that there certainly will be a judgment, and that we who are here will be the subjects of it. Whatever may be the doubts or difficulties of some minds, however far some may be from giving their assent to the course of truth now suggested, none will deny this fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes will make a separation between those who are merely the professors of his truth, and those who have the unction of its spiritual power. All who are here profess to believe in Christ. There is not one present who can be judged as a Jew; there is not one who can be judged as a Heathen. Every one of us must be tested by the profession of sound faith we have made even to-day in the worship of God. We may not all die, but we shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. We may die to-night. We may live till he comes. But as professors of his truth we are possessed of one talent;—oh, how great a treasure compared to the poverty of those who have it not! Have we used it to the glory of God? What have we done with it? Are we preparing to sit upon the throne with Christ? Are we preparing to “enter into his joy?” Have we a foretaste of that joy in our earnest desire to possess it? Where are our affections? Are they set upon the earth? What sentence, then, will be ours, if

we have the form only of godliness? Are they set upon things above, not upon things on the earth? then is our life hid with Christ in God, and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory."

Then, beloved brethren, in whatever tone of feeling you may have received that which I have put before you, remember this one thing, that above and beyond all else, the eternal interest of your soul depends upon your preparing for that judgment, which shall be terrible to those who hide their talent in the earth—who make common cause with Mammon, and bury their profession in worldliness—terrible, indeed, to them! But "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Every one of you who is in Christ will be able to say, "Here I am, Lord, thou hast given me these talents, and enabled me to double them to thy glory." To them it shall be said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."*

* The subject treated in this sermon is more largely considered in two works by the same author; one, entitled "The Prophecy upon the Mount; a practical consideration of our Lord's own statement respecting the Destruction of Jerusalem—His own Appearing—and the End of the Age;" and the other, entitled "The ultimate object of the Redemption by Christ;" a course of lectures preached at Edinburgh for the Association for Promoting the Study and Elucidation of the Prophetic Scriptures. Both these works are in the press.

LECTURE IX.

THE GLORY OF ISRAEL AFTER THE ADVENT.

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ISAIAH LX. 19.

*“ The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light,
and thy God thy glory.”*

AN opinion has extensively prevailed that the subject of unfulfilled prophecy forms no legitimate part of scriptural study for the sober and humble-minded Christian. A veil of mystery hides the impenetrable future from his view, and if he ventures to gaze upon the prospect, and catch some glimpses of the glowing distance, he is admonished not to allow his fancy or imagination to deceive him with vain speculations. Hence a system of mystical or figurative interpretation has been adopted, and almost universally the tangible realities, which form the basis of prophecy, have

been treated as fables or parables illustrative of the spiritual truths contained in the Bible. We may not be surprised, therefore, if professing Christians have run into every extravagance of interpretation, when they follow such an indefinite and arbitrary principle.

The charge which is brought against such a system, is not that men have ignorantly perverted the truth, but that they have left out a most important branch of truth, and consequently lost much of its power and preciousness. The more fully and plainly the literal sense is established, the more powerfully will the spiritual sense be experienced; and in proportion as the former is slurred over, the value of the latter will be diminished. The real events of sacred history form the groundwork of spiritual instruction to the Church, not because they are mystical or supernatural, but because they are types or ensamples to succeeding generations. In like manner the subjects of prophecy are real events, and must be regarded as conveying spiritual lessons by the exhibition of facts. But supposing for a moment that all unfulfilled prophecy admits only of spiritual interpretation, it is necessary for us to define what we mean by the term spiritual; as it may admit of much ambiguity, and open a wide door for confusion and mysticism; for what is the true limit of

spirituality as applied to the soul and the future state? Is it utterly beyond the reach of intelligent perception and actual experience? If the future state of the soul be connected with space, and with the powers and sympathies of a glorified body, then the very term spiritual body involves the idea of physical as well as intellectual perception in its highest sense. We contend, therefore, that the future glory is a legitimate subject of contemplation and inquiry to an enlightened mind, and comes as much within the range of our present faculties and perceptions, as the glorified body of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration when seen and identified by the apostles.

But the point at issue is brought into a narrower compass, if, setting aside the lawfulness of the inquiry, we ask the question how far it is possible to reduce the subjects of unfulfilled prophecy to the standard of our present perceptions. To this we reply, that unfulfilled prophecy contains a revelation of temporal and spiritual events which may be easily distinguished and classified; as, for instance, one class of events belongs exclusively to the heavenly state; another class to earthly events, subordinate to the heavenly state; a third to circumstances which are connected only with a temporal condition. If, then, we have scriptural data whereon to ground an inquiry, however

limited, into the heavenly state, how much more may we enlarge our view and stretch our inquiry to the utmost limit which the Word of God allows, concerning the future glory of the people of Israel. And this will appear yet more clear, if we compare two passages of Scripture which mark the distinction we have drawn. In Isaiah lxiv. 4, the nation of Israel prays for a renewal of temporal and spiritual blessings. "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." The accomplishment of this prayer is delayed to this hour, for it is evident that Israel's national punishment has not been removed, and we have yet to see the Lord "turn again the captivity of Zion," when they will "be like unto men that dream." But the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10) quotes this passage of Scripture in confirmation of the spiritual privileges bestowed upon the Christian Church under the dispensation of grace. This, he says, "is revealed unto us by the Spirit," showing that what will be revealed fully to Israel nationally, is revealed in part to those who live under the Gospel dispensation. And what will be hereafter the glory of Israel nationally, is given to the Christian Church as an earnest or first-fruits individually.

It must, however be confessed, that the glory of Israel, after the advent of our Lord, is enveloped in strange and sublime difficulty. Instead of entering at once the beautiful gate, and taking in detail the varied glories of the sanctuary, the mind pauses, as at the doorway of some newly-discovered temple, whose massive columns are partially buried in the sand, and whose fresh and curious devices fill the mind with intense curiosity and interest. It is a work of difficulty to clear away the obstacles which interrupt a connected view of the whole, and it requires no small effort to trace out the characters in detail. There is an atmosphere of grandeur and solemnity which humbles the soul with a sense of its own littleness. But if the patient traveller has met with his reward among the ruined sepulchres of Egyptian kings, and has discovered palaces underground rich in decoration and costly magnificence, surpassing in splendour the habitations of the living, how much more may the friend of Israel undertake a holier enterprise, and follow the sure guide of prophecy into the bright vision of things revealed, always remembering the promised aid of the Holy Ghost, to "show him things to come?" (John xvi. 13.)

My object in the following discourse is not to embark the imagination on a voyage of discovery without chart or compass, but to trace out, as in a

map laid down from survey made by an unerring hand, what the Word of inspiration has proclaimed of things hoped for in the glory of Israel.

The subject divides itself into the following heads:—

I. THE TIME OF ISRAEL'S GLORY.

II. THE CHARACTER OF IT.

I. THE TIME OF ISRAEL'S GLORY is that which is given in the prospectus, viz., after the advent of Christ. And this I propose to prove by the following considerations:—

There is a marked contrast in the scriptural narrative between the extent of blessedness to be manifested during the dispensation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and that which is to be enjoyed under the Jewish restoration, proving that the one is the forerunner of the other, and that the purpose of God in redemption is not completed by the gathering out of the remnant according to the election of grace. In short, the day of grace stands in beautiful and striking contrast to the day of glory. What is “a light to lighten the Gentiles, is the glory of God's people Israel.” The fall and diminishing of the Jew is the riches of the world—but “how much more his fulness.” The judicial blindness of Israel opens the door of reconciliation, but the receiving of them back into favour is as life from the dead. The Gentile dispensation resembles

the temple built by the Jews after their return from captivity, which only preserved some faint traces of that glory which had set in the destruction of Solomon's temple, and shadowed forth the rising again of that more glorious temple which shall be built in the days of Messiah. "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Hag. ii. 6, 7.) Thus the building commenced by Zerubbabel, a Jew, and finished by Herod, a Gentile, stood for a season as a witness for God, but was finally laid waste until the times of restitution. And in like manner also the Gentile dispensation, owing its foundation to Jewish teachers, but in after times reared and perfected by Gentile agency, occupies its portion of the Divine purpose; but the date of its continuance is fixed, when it shall be said of it, as of Herod's temple, "not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be cast down." And after this shaking and desolation of the Gentiles the temple of glory will be built. As then the grey streak of the dayspring sheds a fainter light than the sun when risen in his strength, so the grace of the Gentile morning has no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth.

During the personal absence of the Sovereign the influence of the Crown is reflected by delegated agency; but, oh! what will be the splendour of the day when the King appears, wearing his many crowns, and attended by a train of ten thousand times ten thousand of his saints, when every tongue in heaven shall say, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ," and when every eye in Jerusalem shall see the Lord to be her everlasting light, and her God her glory.

2. The conclusion of the times of the Gentiles is marked by certain events which can only synchronize with the commencement of the glorious era in Israel. For, by referring to Matt. xxiv. 14, it will be seen, that *the preaching of the Gospel for a witness* among all nations precedes the end. Again, verses 29, 30, *the last great tribulation of Jerusalem* precedes the coming of Christ. In Rev. xvi. 12—15, *the drying up of the Mahomedan power, and the battle of Armageddon*, immediately precede the advent. In Isaiah xxv. 8, 9, and xxvi. 19, 20, *the resurrection of the saints, and the time of indignation*, are placed as coincident with the advent; but it is declared (Rom. xi. 25), that "blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;" and again (Luke xxi. 24), "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gen-

tiles be fulfilled." What then is declared of her glory? In Ps. cii. 13, 16, the answer is given: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Until therefore the standard of the Gospel be lifted up amongst all nations,—and all these things be accomplished,—the drying up of the Mahommedan power,—the last tribulation of Jerusalem,—the resurrection of the saints,—the battle of Armageddon,—and the coming of the Lord, there will be no glory for Israel.

3. The occupation of the saints with Christ in the first resurrection affords another proof that the glory of Israel will be after the advent. For it is evident that the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and whose abode is in the many mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem, will not be in a state of unconsciousness as to the events which are passing in the earthly Jerusalem. If it be true that the saints will judge the earth, that "the disciples of Christ will sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel," that "the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey

him" (Dan. vii. 27); if it be true at the present moment that angels, and principalities, and powers in heavenly places, take cognizance of events passing in the Church militant here below, it is not unreasonable to believe that the saints of the first resurrection will behold with joy and praise unutterable the triumphs of the Redeemer in executing his vengeance upon the Heathen, and punishments upon the people; when he binds their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; and executes upon them the judgment written; when Israel shall rejoice in him that made him, and the children of Zion are joyful in their king. (Ps. cxlix. 5—9.)

4. But a fourth proof is to be found in the passage from which the text is taken, and which demands a separate and more detailed examination. For unless there be clear and incontrovertible evidence in the harmony of Scripture that the present view is not only reasonable and possible, but according to truth, it might seem to be begging the question to argue from facts, which, in the minds of some, have not an immediate or necessary connexion with the literal glory of Israel. I proceed, then, to detach a few points from the statements of prophecy respecting the Jewish people in particular, and to show, by comparison with the context and parallel passages, that until certain

events, standing in immediate and necessary connexion with the second advent of Christ, are fulfilled, the glory of Israel will not be complete.

And first, I notice, that the advent of Christ in humiliation had the effect of setting the hearts of the children against the fathers, of producing division in the heart of Israel, and cutting in twain the bond of national unity; but before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, Elijah the prophet must appear, "crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and" *then* "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah xl. 3—5; Malachi iv. 4, 5.) So that there must be a *preparation of heart* in Israel before the glory of the Lord rises upon her.

Secondly, I gather generally from the prophecies that in the last days a large number of Jews will assemble at Jerusalem and in the Holy Land, in different states of religious feeling; some Rabbinic Pharisees, seeking the re-establishment of the Mosaic ceremonial, with other traditions and commandments of men; some Infidel Sadducees, mocking at the idea of a spiritual revival, and

making terms of peace with the nations, intermarrying, and adopting their customs; some turning to the law and to the testimony, and remembering the law of Moses, which God commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments; some, too, and that a little flock, clinging around the cross of the Redeemer, and waiting in humble patience for the consolation of Israel, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Meanwhile, the extraordinary character of the people, the peculiar influence committed to them by reason of temporal prosperity, the mystery which encircles their law and habits, their history, past and present, will attract the severest malice and jealousy of him whose attacks are specially directed against the chosen of God, who stands at the right hand of the anointed one to resist him, and would retain the brand of Jerusalem in the burning for ever. (Zech. iii. 1, 2.) Hence the nations, like Pharaoh's hosts under somewhat similar circumstances, will come against the city of Zion, and fill the land like an overflowing flood; this is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it, for "the Lord of hosts shall come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it."

(Isa. xxxi. 4, 5.) This will be the period of Anti-christian and Heathen judgment, the false and faithless of Judah and Benjamin will be brought to humiliation, and confession, and conversion, by the immediate revelation of the Lord; and the rumour will spread through the world, that the Lord is returned to Jerusalem with mercy, and that her King is in the midst of her. The outcasts of Israel will now assemble themselves and set their faces towards Zion. "They will fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows;" (Isa. lx. 8,) and the Lord will plead with them face to face, and purge out the rebels, and bring them into the land. (Ezek. xx. 35—38.) Then, and not till then, when the twelve tribes shall be restored and converted, with their King at their head, will the full glory of Israel be seen. (Micah ii. 13.)

I proceed to illustrate this sketch by the context and parallel passages.

1. In the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, a state of abounding and overflowing wickedness is described;—the enemy of Israel coming in like a flood, and the Spirit of the Lord raising up a standard against him. The Lord, clothed in garments of vengeance, and clad with zeal as a cloak; according to their deeds will repay, recompence to his enemies, and fury to his adversaries (Isa. lix. 17, 18); while a division, or separating out, will

take place in Zion, for "the Redeemer will come to them that turn from transgression in Jacob." (Verse 20.) Then follows the revival of the spiritual covenant (verse 21), and in chap. lx., the thrilling announcement to Israel, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." I only notice, here, that all the events which follow in the course of the chapter are connected with the glory of Israel. While darkness covers the Gentiles, the glory of the Lord is seen upon Israel: while Israel flows together, like the meeting of ten thousand tributary streams in a transparent lake, multitudes of converted Gentiles shall be carried along by the tide, and shall come up with acceptance upon God's altar, and he will glorify the house of his glory. If the ships of Tarshish are first to bring the sons of Zion home, it is because the Lord hath glorified her. If the glory of Lebanon shall come with its rich and fragrant beauty, it is because the Lord will make the place of his feet glorious. If the sun is no more a light by day, nor the moon by night, it is because the Lord is her everlasting light, and her God her glory. Compare this order of events with Jeremiah xxx. and xxxi., and we have the same arrangement, (verses 4, 5,) "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Alas! for that day is great; it is

even the time of Jacob's trouble. For it shall come to pass in that day, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." Again, (verse 19,) "Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small."

Take, again, Ezekiel xxxvii., xxxviii., and xxxix., and we trace the destruction of the confederate armies of Gog and Magog, the gathering of the two families of Judah and Israel, the appearing of Christ, the pouring out of the Spirit, and the glory of Zion. For, saith the Lord (xxxix. 21, 22), "I will set my glory among the Heathen, and all the Heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward."

I pass from these to one or two plain revelations in the minor prophets. In Joel ii. and iii. one cannot but remark the close resemblance to the expressions in Jeremiah and Isaiah already quoted. It is a day of darkness;—the enemy is strong. "There hath not been ever the like, neither shall

be any more after it." "Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness." "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army [of saints]: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Then follows the turning from transgression; fasting, weeping, and praying; and the Lord does great things;—the Spirit, who was poured out as an earnest and first-fruits on the day of Pentecost, is now given abundantly;—"In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem is deliverance." The heavens and the earth shake, the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining;—"But the Lord is the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." In Zephaniah, the prophet strikes the same chord (chap. iii. 8, 9): "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them my indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the Lord with one consent." Israel is humbled. "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord;"—"the remnant of Israel shall not speak lies." Then, "Sing, O

daughter of Zion; the Lord hath taken away thy judgments; he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more."

Once more. In Zechariah, a prophecy delivered after the return from the Babylonish captivity (chapters xii. and xiii.), "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege, both against Judah and against Jerusalem." "In that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son." And when the tribulation rises to its height, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

And what shall I say more? for time would fail me to tell what David, and Daniel, and Hosea, and Habakkuk, and Micah, Amos, and Malachi, have added to this consent of the prophets. Let the test applied to patristic truth by modern theologians be applied to the books of the prophets, and it will be found, that the crashing judgments at the close of the Gentile dispensation, and the coming of our blessed Lord, are described, *semper et ubique et ab omnibus*, as the beginning of Israel's glory. Nay, we go further, and say, that this is the only key by which the varied and isolated notes of prophecy, uttered by different voices, and at different ages of the Church, can be brought into one scale of harmony.

II. Having thus disposed of the chronological difficulty which might check further inquiry, I proceed to point out more specifically, THE CHARACTER OF ISRAEL'S GLORY; and shall content myself with an exhibition of facts, rather than of the order in which they occur; although I hope to be able, in some measure, to remove objections which are raised against what is termed the detail of events *after* the coming of Christ.

1. The first great and glorious fact is the reunion and restoration of the twelve tribes, acknowledging Messiah to be their king.

The head and front of Israel's offence from the

beginning was, the rejection of the Lord as their King. The punishment of treason and rebellion has rested upon them, and will rest, until they acknowledge him whom they crucified to be the King of the Jews. Their punishment consisted in their subjection to earthly monarchs, the revolt and division of the nation, the enmity between Israel and Judah, and the final overthrow of the monarchy itself. Such is the description of the Psalmist: "Thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground." (Ps. lxxxix. 38, 39, 44.) But the promise made to David shall not fail: "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." "Unto which promise the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." (Acts xxvi. 7.) But where is the resting-place for faith except in the promise? Look into the valley of the dry bones, what shall rouse these dead, and gather up the mouldering remains? Who shall find out the outcasts in their hiding-places, and identify the dispersed in their wanderings? What human ingenuity, or study, or research, can follow out the generations of Israel since the captivities, and decipher the mark of

individuality, so as to separate them from their fellow-men? True it is, that the descendants of Abraham in these western climes, and in those countries where they sojourn and traffic as strangers and foreigners, are well known, and easily distinguished; but we must remember, that there are millions of Israelites in the world, somewhere, who are not known; and who is he that can put their identity beyond dispute? When, therefore, the pride of man's wisdom is laid low, and the only alternative for the disputant is simple faith in the revelation of God's Word or open blasphemy against it, we present the glorious solution of the enigma in the restoration of the tribes by the Lord himself: "He who scattered Israel shall gather him." (Jer. xxxi. 10.) "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (Ezek. xxxiv. 12.) "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all....And David my servant shall be king over them: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvii.

22, &c.) Neither will this be the work of a moment, or, as some have imagined, a direct miracle; there will be order in the train of events, and certain means will be used. For, if we do not mistake, the Lord will save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah; i. e., that the individual family or city do not exalt themselves above the tribe and its many dwelling-places. (Zech. xii. 7.) He will then manifest himself as the Redeemer, who was dead and is alive, to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who will mourn, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. Then the whole land will be filled with penitential sorrow, and all Jerusalem will go to be baptized in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Judah shall rule with God, and be faithful with his saints. Meanwhile the voice of the Lord will be mighty in operation; the glad tidings shall spread, and bring together the long lost tribes of Ephraim. They shall come forth, as from Egypt of old, with great substance, with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm. As by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved (Hos. xii. 13), so it is probable Elijah will bring the ten tribes into the wilderness, where, as upon Mount Carmel, the

Lord will plead with them face to face, and will cause them to pass under the rod, and bring them into the bond of the covenant, and will purge out the rebels and them which transgress against him, and they shall know that he is the Lord. (Comp. Ezek. xx. 37, &c.; Hos. ii. 14; Mic. vi. 2—5.) Thus will all the children of Jacob come, bending with supplication and godly sorrow, saying, “We are verily guilty concerning this our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear.” The astonished Heathen will admire the bounty and compassion of the true Joseph, who will wipe all tears from their faces, and make them sit down at his feast. Then will the covenant be renewed, “I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds I will write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. x. 16, 17.) And then will their mouth be filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing: then will they say among the Heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. O wondrous grace, and glorious condescension! What tongue shall express the blessedness of that day, when all the tribes shall be assembled, and every heart beat high with holy love, Ephraim saying, What have I to do any more with idols? and Judah walking with the house of Israel. Ephraim shall not envy Judah,

and Judah shall not vex Ephraim, when the earth shall be in travail to bring forth the nation of God's peculiar choice and favour; and when it shall be said, "Rejoice, O ye Gentiles, with his people." "Lift up thine eyes, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come unto thee." "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. lx. 14.) Oh! if it be our privilege to partake of heavenly joy,—if it be in our hearts to sympathise with angels in their praise and gratitude when one sinner turns from the error of his ways,—how much more shall the heart of redeemed and risen saints fill all heaven with acclamation when twelve tribes of penitent Jews cast themselves at the feet of Immanuel, and repeat that chapter which has been for centuries rejected by the nation: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted: he was despised, and we esteemed him not?" (Isa. liii.) When, too, this song will be sung in the land of Judah, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation." (Isa. xii. 1, 2.) " Surely, shall one (and all) say, In the Lord, have I righteousness and strength : for in the Lord shall *all the seed of Israel* be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 24, 25.) Thus the people shall be all righteous ; and the number of Israel as many as the sand upon the sea-shore, or as the stars of the heaven for multitude. " The children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David (the beloved) their King." (Hos. iii. 5.)

2. But a second great fact, connected with the glory of Israel, is the restitution and division of the land of promise by lot.

The prophet Obadiah, having described the judgment of the Heathen, in verses 15 and 16, adds, verse 17, " But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness ; and the house of Israel shall possess their possessions ;" or, in other words, shall inherit the grant made to their forefather Abraham. We have only to refer to the terms of this grant, and we shall find that it includes a considerably larger extent of territory than ever has been yet possessed by the nation of Israel. Thus, in Gen. xv. 18, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, " Unto thy seed

have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Again, in Exod. xxiii., and Deut. xi. 24, the grant is renewed: "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you." Now it is evident, that Israel never yet possessed so large a portion; for under Joshua and Solomon, the extent of the land eastward was Jordan, and the allotments of two tribes and a-half eastward of it. Beyond this boundary lay the possession of their enemies. For in the days of David and Solomon, the Psalmist spake of Israel's enemies, who said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation. For they have consulted together with one consent; and are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot." (Psalm lxxxiii. 4—8.) The border of Israel at that time was, therefore, limited; and although (1 Kings iv. 24) Solomon kept many nations under tribute, they were not cast out or dispossessed of their territory: but in the day of the true David, it shall be said

of Israel (Isa. xlix. 19) "Thy waste and desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow, by reason of the inhabitants. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell." And again (Isa. liv. 1, 2), "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Then shall the Word be fulfilled (Psalm lx. 6), "I will rejoice, and divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me." Then shall Balaam's prophecy be accomplished,—“The star of Jacob, and the sceptre of Israel, shall literally smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom

shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly." (Numb. xxiv. 17, 18.) In short, the division mentioned by Ezekiel will then be made: when (chap. xlvii. 13) "This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers. And this shall be the border." Observe, *From the Mediterranean to the Euphrates*; from the western sea to the eastern sea; the same word being applied to both, as in Jer. li. 36. "And the Levites shall have a portion: and five tribes shall be south of Judah; and the stranger shall be permitted to purchase an inheritance:" an arrangement totally different from any former disposition of the land. Then, indeed, will "the wilderness and the solitary place be glad for them; and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose. When the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.) "Then the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Then (Joel

iii. 18) "shall they beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks:" "nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. ii. 4.) "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid."* (Micah iv. 3, 4.) "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9.) "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; wasting nor destruction within thy borders. The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 18, 19.)

3. The third great fact connected with the glory of Israel, is the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the re-establishment of its civil or political privileges, as the city of the great King.

Whatever rebuilding of the old wastes, and repairing of breaches, may take place before the advent of Christ, it is clear, from what has been already urged, that in the day of the great siege there will be a sore destruction of the city; and, therefore, if Jerusalem is hereafter to be literally the city of the Lord, it must be rebuilt and enlarged. We interpret, therefore, literally, the promises in Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Zechariah;

* See also Zech. viii. 12.

and venture to give it as our deliberate judgment, that the city in Ezekiel is not the same as that described in Revelations;—the one being a description of the earthly, the other of the new, or heavenly Jerusalem.

In confirmation of this view, I will quote the authority of Mede, who says, “that the measures in Ezekiel being diverse from those of St. John, in the Apocalypse, if the cities be the same, the numbers must also be the same.” But this is not the case; and unless we adopt a mystical instead of a literal interpretation, we cannot meet the overwhelming difficulty which presents itself in the last ten chapters of Ezekiel,—a portion of Scripture which one of its best commentators acknowledges to be utterly beyond the scope of scriptural or figurative interpretation. (Greenhill.)

This, then, is the language of Scripture—“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built unto the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies (Hinnom), and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more

it shall be according to the highest standard of moral virtue and holiness. For while heaven is God's throne, earth is his footstool; and He who fills heaven and earth hath a delight in Jerusalem. There hath he set his throne; for it is written,—“And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; *the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.*” (Micah iv. 8.) “And at that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord.” (Jer. iii. 17.) Under such a king, what must be the character of the subjects? There will be order and executive agency; and while the king reigns in righteousness princes will decree judgment; “the head of the rash will understand knowledge; the vile person will be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.” (Isa. xxxii. 4.) There will be subordinate ministers and officers; and as Moses appointed captains of fifties and captains of hundreds, so, under the King of Righteousness, there will be a captain of thousands as well as the captains of fifties. This, probably, is the person mentioned by Jeremiah xxx. 21,—“Their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is he that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?” This is the prince of Ezekiel, who shall “sit in the eastern gate of the

sanctuary and eat bread before the Lord." (Ezek. xliv. 3.) In his hands the details of government shall be arranged; the officers shall be peace, the exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in the land. They shall be far from oppression, and from terror: thus the Lord will restore judges as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward she shall be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. (See Isa. i. 26, 27; Zech. viii. 3.)

4. The fourth great fact connected with Israel's glory, is the revival of a pure and national form of worship in the rebuilding of the temple, and the adaptation of ceremonial observances to the spirit and principles of the Gospel.

1. *The rebuilding of the temple.*

If the arrangement of events thus far commends itself to your minds, it will be following the same order if we place the rebuilding of the temple after the advent. Ezekiel and Isaiah both place the building of the beautiful sanctuary after the reunion of the two families of Judah and Israel. And if this be the case, it is only advancing one step further to say, that the pattern of the temple given to Ezekiel forms the design and working plan of the temple which shall be built in the days of

Messiah. I will not, therefore, enter into any minute detail of the measurement and architectural arrangement, but observe how entirely it will differ both in size and proportions from those built by Solomon and Zerubbabel. If in them there was lavish expenditure of gold and silver, the glory of Lebanon shall not be wanting, nor the fir-tree, nor the pine, nor the box, nor silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, for the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts. If gifts and presents abounded in the days of Solomon, and contributions poured in from every quarter towards the building of his temple, how much more, when all the earth will be laid under a levy of voluntary love and emulation to rear the glorious temple of Jehovah-Jesus; when the kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring their presents; and the kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts: when he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. (Ps. lxxii.) "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver; scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Æthiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." (Ps. lxxviii.)

If the presence of Jehovah shone in the Shechinah's mysterious light, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud above the cherubim, how much more, when the glory of the God of Israel come from the east, and his voice be like a noise of many waters, and the earth shall shine with his glory and when the glory of the Lord shall come into the house and fill it. But the services of the sanctuary shall be conducted in a manner corresponding to this external and visible splendour, and the worship of the Lord shall be in the beauty of holiness.

2. This will consist in the establishment of a spiritual priesthood.

For when the messenger of the covenant comes to his temple, "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord." (Mal. iii. 3—5.) And here I take occasion to notice the spirit of the new dispensation, as expressed by Ezek. xlv. 10; for "the Levites which went astray after their idols, shall bear their iniquity; yet shall they be ministers in the sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house; while the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of the sanctuary when the children of Israel

went astray, shall enter into the sanctuary, and come near to the table, and minister unto the Lord, and keep all his charge. They shall teach the people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the clean and the unclean; and in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgment: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my assemblies, and they shall hallow my Sabbaths." How exactly does this fall in with every sympathy of our hearts, under the dispensation of the Gospel! What could we desire better for Israel, than that the law which is holy, just, and good, should be practically brought out and exhibited under the influence of spiritual life? And what more likely to exalt the glory of Immanuel, when all that holy obedience which was so conspicuous in Jesus, in his conformity to ceremonial and spiritual observances, shall be reflected in the conformity of the restored priesthood to his pattern? Nor, again, are we without evidence that there will be an actual change of some parts of the Mosaic system, for it seems plain that,

Edly, The Sabbath will be changed from the seventh to the first day, even as it has been since the resurrection of our Lord.

In Ezek. xliii. 26, it is commanded, that the

priests shall purge the altar seven days, and purify it; and then shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be upon the eighth day, viz., the first day of the next week, *and so forward*, the priest shall make the burnt-offerings upon the altar, and the peace-offerings, and God will accept them. Thus, the legal ceremonies will be celebrated upon the day of the resurrection of Christ; and thus, when the priests are clothed with salvation, the people shall shout aloud for joy. Prayer shall be made continually, and daily shall he be praised. Then the song of thanksgiving in Ps. lxvi. shall resound through the temple aisle,—“Thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. We will go into thy house with burnt-offerings: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats.”

And this forms the fourth and last feature, viz., *the renewal of sacrificial worship*.

And here I must pause a few moments, to meet the objection of those who would set aside the

whole view which has been taken, upon the ground that sacrifices never can be renewed, as being inconsistent with the Gospel dispensation. In stating my reasons for adopting the present view, I must claim indulgence, under the conviction that I speak even with fear and trembling upon so difficult and sublime a subject.

It appears to me, that worship as accepted by God, and worship as offered by man, are widely different. God is, and has been, worshipped in a very great variety of forms; but worship by any individual man, or class of men, is confined to the use of those forms and means which are revealed by God. Hence, it follows, that while the form of worship is revealed, it is the duty and privilege of man to use it; but it is not the form which constitutes the act of worship, nor the form which sanctifies the worshipper; on the contrary, it is the spirit of the worship which constitutes the worship, and the spirit of the worshipper which sanctifies the form. For "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now, it is evident, that sacrifice was instituted from the very beginning as an act of worship; and if so, was a channel for spiritual services; and, consequently, if God pleased so to ordain, might be employed at any period of the history of the world. But God has ordained that

it should be observed by the circumcision, until the covenant made with the circumcision shall cease. And as this law has never yet been abrogated, it is not unreasonable to suppose that sacrifices might now be employed as spiritual acts of worship by the Jews. But it may further be urged, that sacrifices, as signs or symbols for Jewish worship, admit of as entire an adaptation to spiritual service as the ordinances and sacraments of the Christian Church. For the sacrifice did not make the comer thereunto perfect, any more than the sacraments make the comer thereunto perfect. The sacrifice was the symbol or sign of the faith of him who offered it, and had respect, as a means to an end, to the thing signified; and this was enjoined to the circumcision. Again, the sacraments are signs and seals of the faith of him who receives them, and have respect to the thing signified; and these were ordained for the Gospel dispensation. As, then, faith in Christ makes the sacrament an effectual sign and seal of grace to the Christian, so faith in Christ makes the sacrifice effectual to the Jew. But faith is the same in all ages. The faith of Abel is precisely the same in its object, subject, and operation, as the faith of Paul or of Luther. If, then, Abel's faith rendered his sacrifice more excellent than that of Cain, it is evident that the difference lies not between the offerings in themselves—the one being meat, the other a slain animal—but in the spirit and

intention with which the offerings were made; for it is written, "God had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Let us apply this to the subject under review, and we may use the same expressions to the restored Jew in the temple of the latter day. He, like Abel, offers his sacrifice, and looks by faith to the Lord Jesus: why shall not the Lord have respect unto him and his offering, which is commanded in the law, just as much as unto the Gentile who receives the sacrament, which is commanded in the Gospel?

But it may be asked, Is it commanded? Assuredly. Turn to a prophecy relating to times subsequent to the restoration of the twelve tribes, and you have the answer (Jer. xxxiii. 17, 18), "Thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually." And in Ezekiel xlv., xlvi., the most minute directions as to the manner in which the sacrifices are to be offered, are given, and which, in some respects, will be found to differ from the details under the law of Moses. That these commands were considered binding upon Jews up to the time of the first ages of Christianity is manifest from the narratives in the New Testament. Our blessed

Saviour attended the feasts and ceremonies of the temple with his parents. The disciples after the ascension "returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." (Luke xxiv. 53.) Some time after this at Jerusalem Paul submitted to certain ceremonies of the law, because there were many thousands of Jews which believed, and were all zealous for the law. And he took the four men who had a vow on them, and purifying himself with them, entered into the temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. (Numb. vi. 14, 15.) Now let us ask, How did Paul understand sacrifice? He offered sacrifice after he was converted. He kept the feast at Jerusalem. He came to bring alms to his nation and offerings; and would he, as a Christian, have observed these ordinances, if they did not convey to his soul spiritual edification, and tend to the glory of God. Or, again, was Paul ignorant of the true spirit of the Gospel or Gentile dispensation? Did he not upon one occasion show plainly that a ceremony was binding upon a Jew which was not needful for a Gentile, when he circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewess, who believed (Acts xvi. 1, 2, 3); but did not compel Titus to undergo that rite, because he was a

Greek. We see, then, that what was enjoined to the circumcision was obeyed by the circumcision, but what belonged to the Gentiles by the Gentiles. Why then should not sacrifices be again observed by circumcised believers in the latter day?

Surely the rich and costly offerings which will then be made will flow from pure and holy love to the Saviour; every sacrifice will testify the faith of them that offer it. For every sacrifice will be a feast. The burnt-offering will then be discerned by an enlightened eye, and will call to mind the lost and ruined state of man in Adam—wholly consumed. The sin-offering will set forth actual trespass and short-coming. The peace-offering and the thank-offering the abounding and exceeding great love of God our Saviour; as the blood flows from the victim, the mind will trace the characters of death on account of sin, and in those very characters decipher life in atonement for sin. And as in vision John beheld a lamb as it had been slain, so will the Israelite behold in reality the type and the antitype face to face. O, blessed and happy period! “In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they

that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein." (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.) "Then shall the flocks of Kedar be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance upon mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory, saith the Lord." (Isaiah lx. 7.) And now I must bring this discourse to a conclusion. Did time permit, I might enlarge on the glory of Israel among the nations, when Jerusalem shall be a praise and a joy in the earth; when the very name of a Jew will be held in reverence; and when all nations will come up and worship in the Holy City—but I forbear. What remains, is to show the practical application of the subject.

Let us admire and anticipate the faithfulness of the Lord.

We have been following the literal delineation of promises made to the nation of Israel. We have stood upon the ruins of former glory, and have anticipated the coming and future glory. Can we for a moment suppose, that if Israel literally rises from the dust, she will lose her identity, and pass at once into a new and different relation both in the sight of God and in the sight of men? Far otherwise. Though a woman may forsake her sucking child, yet the Lord will not forsake Jerusalem whom he has engraven on the

palms of his hands, and whose walls are continually before him. Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law; not one term or condition shall be wanting to the covenant; not one syllable shall fall to the ground of all that has been spoken concerning Israel: all shall come to pass. If judgments and chastisements are threatened, they shall be fulfilled. If patience and long-suffering, they shall be revealed. If salvation and glory, they shall be enjoyed. Oh, what a door of hope and encouragement does Israel's history open to the believer! Let me stand upon my watch-tower and survey the scene as it passes in panoramic vision before the eye. Here I see the cloud rising the size of a man's hand! Here I see the little one become a thousand, and the nations wondering at its mysterious growth. Anon, the tempest gathers, and little by little the bright objects are obscured, and a long period of darkness follows: again I look, and behold the beacon upon the mountain top bursts into a blaze, the whole landscape is illumined, a flood of glory gilds the scene, and I am lost in wonder and adoration. Such is Israel's history, telling out among the Heathen that the Lord is true to his threatenings and his promises, to his curses and his blessings. Has this no practical influence with Christians? O let them read their chequered experience, and retrace their

steps from Egypt to Sinai, from the desert to Canaan, from Canaan to the varied trials and afflictions of this life, and then let them look forward and rest in the faithfulness of a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God and Saviour! He who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Christ. Faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it. He who leads Isreal leads you. He who glorifies Israel glorifies you. For whom he justifies he glorifies.

LECTURE X.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD.

BY THOMAS HILL, B.D.,
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REV. XX. 11, 12.

“ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

How harmonious, my brethren, is that revelation which the Scriptures present to us of God's dealings with his intelligent creatures. He forms them, angels and men, by his almighty power, and places them in circumstances which try their

fidelity. Of the former, some fall from their allegiance, and are reserved for judgment; others are sustained in their integrity by a special interposition of Divine power. The latter, ruined through the transgression of their first head and representative, are, by an act of sovereign mercy, placed again upon their trial. A method of deliverance, suited alike to the character of man as a moral agent, and to that of God as the moral Governor of the world, is devised in infinite wisdom, and offered in infinite mercy to the apostate race. The Almighty Father sends his beloved Son to atone for the guilt, his Holy Spirit to renew the soul of the revolted creature; institutes certain conditions on which the promise of eternal life is suspended—conditions suited to his own perfections and to the wants of man—"repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" gathers men into visible union with himself by one sacrament, and preserves them in it by another; reveals the counsels of his will in a volume written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and commissions a number of the restored community to go forth as the preachers of this Word, and the dispensers of these sacraments.

The Scriptures further intimate to us, that this period of probation has its limit, and will end in a judgment to be passed on all, both angels and men,

by that man whom God hath ordained; and that this judgment is immediately preparatory to the establishment of a mighty kingdom, of which there shall be no end.

To this doctrine of a judgment to come, as indeed to all the great truths of revelation, there are other witnesses besides that of Scripture. Human *reason*, if not sufficient of herself to discover it, gives her ready assent to its truth. The fabled judges of the infernal regions, the gloom of Tartarus, the bliss of Elysium, are so many proofs that even the light of nature can reveal a judgment after death; and they serve to explain the remarkable fact, that the philosophers of Athens, who mocked at the resurrection of the dead, offered no denial to the assertion, that God "will judge the world in righteousness." *Conscience* adds her testimony to the same truth: the consternation of Belshazzar, the trembling of Felix, resulted from no apprehension of *temporal* evil, but from the fear of a judgment to come. It is a truth deducible from the very first principles of *natural religion*. From the inequality of the present dispensation, in which the good are afflicted, and the evil prosper, it is obviously "a righteous thing with God" to rectify this inequality by a judgment after death. It is one of the results of that relation, which the creature bears to its

Creator. The Creator has a right to give a law, for the breach of which the creature is accountable; and, if accountable, then he must one day render his account to God.

But that truth, which nature and reason could but suggest or approve, stands revealed in the broad page of inspiration, from its earliest to its latest records. From the proclamation of Enoch to the antediluvian rebels, of the Lord's coming with his holy myriads "to execute judgment upon all," to the gracious assurance with which the canon of Scripture closes, "*Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be;*"* the judgment of the world in righteousness has been the theme, support, and joy, of the faithful, and the subject of their warning to the world in which they lived. There was no uncertainty in Abraham's question, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*† no mixture of doubt in Job's assertion, *that there is a judgment;*‡ or in Solomon's closing admonition, *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*§

In the New Testament the same truth is set forth with increased explicitness and vigour. The

* Rev. xxii. 12.

† Gen. xviii. 25.

‡ Job xix. 29.

§ Eccles. xii. 14.

judgment to come had its earnest in the discriminating effect of the Lord's earthly ministry, compared by the Baptist to the winnowing fan, with which he should purge his floor; and its full development in his own repeated declaration, that it would be *more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for those cities where his mighty works were done, and they repented not; when the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South would rise up against that wicked generation and condemn them.** It received its clearer attestation in the warning given by his apostle, that *God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead; †* its more minute and more appalling announcement in that special revelation of himself given to his beloved disciple in the Isle of Patmos. It was naturally to be expected, that in a book, the express object of which was the revelation of his future advent, and of the long train of events, which by their successive accomplishment would indicate its approach, the great end of that coming, the final separation of the two great classes into which mankind are divided, would be more prominently exhibited; that the Church and the world would be warned of

* Matt. xi. 21—25.

† Acts xvii. 21.

that day, when he should *sit upon his great white throne, and from his face the earth and the heaven should flee away; and there should be found no place for them: when the dead, small and great, should stand before God, and the books should be opened; and another book should be opened, which is the book of life: and the dead should be judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.*

There is no one, I am persuaded, who will require me to prove that this passage is to be understood in its plain and literal import. "The twentieth of the Apocalypse," says the learned Mede, "of all the narrations of that book, seems to be the most plain and simple; most free of allegory, and of the involution of prophetic figures. How can a man, then, in so plain and simple a narration, take a passage of so plain and ordinarily expressed words in any other sense than the usual and the literal?"

In assigning to it the exact place which it will occupy in the series of prophetic fulfilments, there may, perhaps, be some difficulty, from the strong resemblance it bears to Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days for the destruction of the fourth monarchy, in which a *judgment was set*, and in which, also, before a *great throne, the books were*

*opened.** Nor would we venture to pronounce it *absolutely impossible* that the one vision should be the counterpart of the other. Supposing the tenth verse of this chapter, which immediately precedes the text, to conclude the vision of which it forms a part, with a final intimation of the purposes of God; and the recapitulation of the introductory scenes of the advent to commence with the text, instead of beginning with the second verse of the next chapter, where there is confessedly a representation of millennial glory, ushered in with the descent of the new Jerusalem—the same with the bride spoken of in the nineteenth chapter, whose nuptials are pre-millennial; we should have a complete enumeration of the occurrences of the advent, without any transposition of their order; the Judge seated on the great white throne,—the heavens and the earth fleeing away,—the dead judged,—new heavens and earth appearing in the place of the former,—the new Jerusalem descending,—and the voice proceeding from him who sat on the throne, and said, in the review of all these things, *Behold, I make all things new.†* There is nothing, I repeat, in the narrative of this vision, if viewed apart from the preceding context, which *necessarily* precludes its identity with the vision in

* Dan. vii. 10.

† Rev. xxi. 5.

Daniel vii., and, consequently, its *pre*-millennial fulfilment. This interpretation, too, would account for the mention, in this place, of the book of life, which, if the judgment is *post*-millennial, it is not easy to explain.

This interpretation, however, though not without much show of argument in its favour, is attended with difficulties apparently insuperable. For if, by "the dead, small and great," we are to understand a simultaneous resurrection of all that have ever died, then what becomes of the doctrine of a "*first* resurrection?" and how are those "blessed and holy" ones who have "part in" it to be distinguished from the rest of the dead, who lived not again until the thousand years were finished?" Again, if "the earth and the heaven fled away" from before a *pre*-millennial throne, and "there was no more place found for them;"—if "the new heaven and the new earth," in which, we are told, "there was *no more sea*," be *pre*-millennial, how can this be made to consist with the continuance of the earth and the heaven in the millennial state, in which, as we know from St. Paul's application of the eighth Psalm to *the world to come*,* there will also be a sea? In no way, as it seems, could such an inconsistency be removed, but by

* Heb. ii. 5—8.

the scheme, which Mede so justly denounces, of spiritualizing what will naturally admit of a literal meaning; and representing the removal of the earth, and the heaven, and the sea, as denoting, not any physical changes in the earth, but only the rapid and utter removal of civil and ecclesiastical institutions existing at the time of the advent.

Assuming, then, that the vision related in the text is to be interpreted literally, and is post-millennial, we proceed to offer a brief exposition of its terms.

And I saw a great white throne. A throne is the well-known emblem of royal power and judicial authority: applied to our Lord, it represents his investiture in the power of his Father, or in the possession of his own dominion. It is here called a "great" throne, to denote the dignity of him who sat upon it, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; the magnitude of the work transacted before it, the judgment of the dead, small and great; the grandeur of the occasion, the judgment of the great day, the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It is further called a "white" throne; to express, not only its majesty and splendour, but the purity and justice which are the attributes of the Judge.

And him that sat on it. Sitting is, in all countries, the posture of a judge;* and we infer from the expression the *visible* presence of him to whom it is applied. He comes in a form, the form of risen manhood. How unlike *the form of a servant*, in which he tabernacled on earth! How unlike that form in which he was arraigned at the bar of an earthly judge! He sits on this great white throne, the *man* ordained to be the Judge of the myriads of the dead.

From whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. On these words, what better comment can be offered than the prophetic assurance of another apostle? *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.*† That new heaven and new earth, into which the present shall be transformed at the commencement of the millennium, shall at the close of it be abolished.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. We learn, from the fifth verse, that “the rest of the dead,” as distinguished from *the dead in Christ*, who rose at “the first resurrection,” “lived not till the thousand years were over.” Their

* Judg. v. 10. Matt. xxvii. 19. Acts. xxiii. 3.

† 2 Pet. iii. 10.

resurrection, if we rightly conceive the order of the narrative, is here represented as succeeding the judgment of the devil, and of the nations of living men whom he had deceived.

*And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. The idea conveyed by the word "book" is evidently that of a register, in which things are written or recorded ; and it naturally expresses God's exact knowledge and faithful remembrance of all the actions of all the myriads of mankind : and they were judged according to their works ; the judgment, according to the apostle's reasoning, in the opening of the Epistle to the Romans, affecting alike those who have possessed the knowledge of revelation, with their greater, and those who were destitute of it, with their lesser responsibilities ; when he will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory honour and immortality, eternal life : but unto them that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with God.**

* Rom. ii. 7—10.

And another book was opened, which is the book of life. The account usually given of the introduction of this book is, that it was to ascertain that none of the wicked were written in it. It should, however, be remarked, that this book is not described as *the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; nor yet as *the book of life from the foundation of the world*.* It may, then, be *another* book, indicating another kind of salvation; even of Israel in the flesh, who are saved in “the beloved city,” like Noah’s family in the ark, to be the seed of a new world.

The text, then, thus briefly explained, will be found to bear testimony to—

I. THE PERSON OF THE JUDGE.

II. THE SUBJECTS OF THE JUDGMENT.

III. THE EQUITY OF THE PROCESS.

I. As God the Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, we are sure that he who sitteth on the great white throne is a symbol of God the Son, and the text affords one of the most striking testimonies contained in all Scripture to the *deity* of him, who is at the same time the *man* ordained to judge the world in righteousness. A great white throne is seen, and the dead, small and great, stand before *God*. And

* Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8.

what part is there of the great work which he came to accomplish, for which the union of the two natures in his mysterious person was more indispensably necessary? He must be *God*; for who but the *Omniscient* can know, so as to judge, the works, the words, the thoughts of men? He must be *God*; for at whose voice but that of the *Omnipotent* shall all that are in the graves come forth? And of whom, but the *Infinitely Just One*, can it be affirmed that he will judge, not according to the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge, and reprove with equity? He must also be the *man*, Christ Jesus: for how shall the justice of God be vindicated in suffering him to be condemned at Pilate's bar, and die as a malefactor? how but by granting him now the power of absolution and condemnation, and causing all the sons of men to bow before his throne? He must be *man*; for how otherwise could we appear before him? If the children of Israel could not endure the presence of God as a *Law-giver*, but desired to receive the law by the hand of Moses, how should we appear before the presence of that God, judging us for the breach of that law, were it not for a better Mediator, of the same nature that Moses was, and we are, who is our Judge?

The constitution of the God-man as the Judge

of men, is an essential part of that manifestation of God in the person of his Son, which we believe to be the final end of all God's revealed purposes. Believing, as we assuredly do, that all the acts of God have been done in the person of the Son, it were inconceivable, that in the grand consummation of these purposes which we are now contemplating, any other agency should be employed. When can he give so bright a manifestation of God's attributes, as when seated on the great white throne? How can he give a more signal display of God's *justice* than by proving, even to the consciences of the impenitent, that their ruin was from themselves; that sin is that odious thing which the Word of God describes it; and that it is equitably punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power? How more awfully manifest God's *omniscience* than by showing, that from the beginning he hath searched the hearts and tried the reins of all the children of men; that the sins which they have committed, the graces which they have exercised, the motives by which they have been governed, all these he will "set in the light of his countenance?" How can he more gloriously display God's *immutability*, than by proving that from his law one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass, till all be fulfilled, and that

his Gospel is the power of God unto eternal salvation to all who embraced it? What more illustrious exhibition can he give of God's *power*, than when he is seen having in his hand the keys of death and of Hades, and when from his face the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place shall be found for them?

Such, my brethren, is the first point to which the text bears testimony; the *person of the Judge*—the God-man, the manifester of God, and the vindicator of all his acts to the whole intelligent creation.

II. We next learn who are THE SUBJECTS OF THE JUDGMENT.

If there be a truth clearly revealed in Scripture, it is this; that all who have ever existed, whatever may have been their character, and under whatever dispensation they may have lived, must give account of themselves to the Judge of quick and dead. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.†* Therefore, whatever diffi-

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† John v. 29.

culty there may be in determining the interval that shall elapse between the two resurrections; or in ascertaining whether *all* of the one class shall rise at the first of these periods, and *all* of the other at the second; whatever may be the diversity in the nature of that judgment to which these two great classes and the various subdivisions of them will be subjected, this at least is clear, that there is a sense in which all who have ever lived shall stand before the Son of man. This universality of the judgment is declared, or necessarily implied, in the text. If it were lawful to consider it, as it has been in past ages considered, a description of a simultaneous and universal judgment of all that have ever lived, it would not be easy to find words more comprehensive than these, *The dead, small and great, stand before God*. But as such an interpretation is necessarily precluded by considerations already stated, and as the judgment here announced must consequently be supplementary to a former one; the question to be determined, or, I should rather say, humbly and reverently asked, is, what portion of the dead are concerned in the former, and what in the latter act of this twofold judgment?

The doctrine of "the first resurrection" having been already brought before you, it is superfluous to remark that the subjects of it are, according to

the express assertion of the apostle, *they that are Christ's at his coming.** For *we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep: the dead in Christ shall rise first.†* From these and other passages it has doubtless been shown to you that the raised saints, who, together with the changed ones, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, form with them the whole *Church of the first-born.* And this brief allusion to the subject of the first resurrection is simply made to assist our inquiry into the nature of that *judgment* which passes upon the *dead in Christ*, who have a part in *that* resurrection, as distinct from the judgment of *the dead, small and great*, which is the subject of the text.

Now these raised saints, who, together with the living ones, descend with the Lord, as the assessors of his throne, when he comes down to the earth, appear, as we cannot doubt, marshalled in their various orders and degrees of glory and dominion; and how can these stations have been assigned respectively to each, unless a judgment of their works has taken place during the period that they are with the Lord in the air?

We conclude, then, that the subjects of that judgment, which we call "the judgment of the dead," are, in the first place, those who are raised

* 1 Cor. xv. 23.

† 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16.

at the coming of the Lord, and receive their respective rewards previously to his descent to the earth; and, secondly, those who live not again, until the thousand years are completed.

The widely different sense in which the word “judgment” is used in the two cases will appear when we consider—

III. The testimony which the text bears to THE EQUITY OF THE JUDICIAL PROCESS: *they were judged according to their works.*

The judgment of the elect saints, who will have been raised at the Lord's advent, is indeed a judgment according to works; but it is rather a trial or investigation of their works, in order that every one may receive the just reward of his labour, than a judgment of their *persons*; from which we believe that they will be entirely exempt. To their persons there can be no condemnation. *Their sins are covered*;* will God remove that covering, to expose the iniquities of his people to men and angels? Their *transgressions are blotted out as a cloud*.† Is the cloud that has been so scattered to be collected again? Christ hath *sanctified and cleansed his Church, that he may present her to himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*;‡ and can we for a moment imagine that the bride, clothed with the robes of

* Rom. iv. 7.

† Isa. xliv. 22.

‡ Eph. v. 27.

immortality and glory, will, on the day of her nuptials, hear her faults and transgressions brought under judgment?

The judgment, then, of the *dead in Christ* is the judgment of their works, and is described in the parable of the pounds and the talents. For even should these parables prove to relate exclusively to that portion of the Church which shall be living at the time of the advent, still the principle which they are intended to illustrate, that *God is not unrighteous to forget his people's work and labour of love,** must equally apply to those who, having served God in their successive generations, have fallen asleep, to be raised at the day of their Lord's coming.

The judgment of *the rest of the dead* is, as we learn from the positive declaration of the chapter before us, deferred until after a period of a thousand years. The *blessed and holy who have part in the first resurrection* have entered into the joy of their Lord; *but the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are finished.* Then another resurrection takes place, when the dead, small and great, stand before God to undergo a *personal* judgment; and *whosoever is not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire.*

The affirmation of the text, that the judgment of all these myriads who have ever lived shall be

* Heb. vi. 10.

according to their works, receives, perhaps, from no part of the Sacred Volume a more ample illustration than from the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The apostle's *immediate* object is, doubtless, to bring in the whole world guilty before God, that so he may lead men to seek the only way of deliverance opened to them in the Gospel. But his argument discloses *incidentally* such a view of the certainty and universality of the general judgment, and of those principles of impartial equity on which it will be conducted, as to afford the most satisfactory exposition of that which our text briefly, though expressly, announces.

Setting out with this, as an axiom, that *there is no respect of persons with God*,* who therefore, although as a Sovereign he may distribute his favours as he pleases, must, *as a Judge*, proceed with every individual alike; the apostle goes on to apply this principle to the award pronounced on the various classes of mankind. *For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law.*† In determining the doom of those who have had no written revelation of the Divine will, if they be found to have sinned, regard shall be had, not to that revelation of which they were ignorant, but to that righteous judgment with which, as it had been proved,‡ they were acquainted. *And as many as*

* Rom. ii. 11.

† Rom. ii. 12.

‡ Rom. i. 32.

*have perished in, or under, the law, shall be judged by the law.** If they who, together with the light of reason and conscience, possessed also the advantage of a revelation, were yet found sinners, that very revelation would condemn them; for, even according to the terms and conditions of their law, “not the hearers of it are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified;† not those who merely acknowledged its obligations, but those who performed its stipulated services. He then proceeds to assign a reason why sinners of the Gentiles, who had not a revealed law, were yet amenable to God’s tribunal. Although they had not received a revelation, yet God had not left them without a knowledge of the guilt and desert of their evil deeds; for, he argues, when we see these Gentiles observing the grand principles of the moral law, it shows that they have the *work of the law written on their hearts*;‡ that they have inscribed upon their minds by nature a sense of right and wrong, corresponding to that which it was the chief object of the revealed law to produce. The same truth, he maintains, is attested by the suggestions of their conscience: they are visited with remorse on account of their crimes, they can exult in the remembrance of their virtues.

Time does not allow, nor does need require, that

* Rom. ii. 12.

† Ib. ver. 13.

‡ Ib. ver. 14, 15.

we should further pursue the argument by which the apostle proves the impartial justice with which God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ; and equally unnecessary is it to remark, how readily this reasoning applies to those who live under the dispensation of the Gospel. If the poor Heathen is by the law of his nature justly amenable to God's tribunal; if the Jew is to be judged by the revelation with which he was intrusted, how certainly may we gather, that those to whom life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, shall be judged according to the higher advantages which they have enjoyed. But in a matter so momentous we are left in no degree of uncertainty. "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."* These, then, are to *us* the terms of probation; they will therefore be those of our judgment. *The word that I speak*, says our Lord, *the same shall judge every man at the last day.*† We are required to receive Jesus in those characters, of Prophet, Priest, and King, in which he is revealed as the restorer of the fallen creature from the ruins of the fall. Those who so receive him are saved; those who reject him perish. And this rejection of the offered salvation, the Scriptures further inform us, greatly aggravates the doom of the disobedient.

* Mark xvi. 16.

† John xii. 48.

*Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.** “*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.†*” *He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.‡*

It is of the greatest importance that we rightly understand the basis of this responsibility. No one can read the Scripture with an honest mind and not see that he is dealt with as possessing moral powers, and is therefore punishable for transgressing the commands addressed to him as one endued with those powers. True it is, that the circumstances of *our* trial widely differ from those in which *Adam’s* took place. *His* affections were holy, and his faculties in their full vigour;

* Matt. xi. 21, 22. † John xv. 22. ‡ Heb. x. 28—30.

while *we* are "born in sin," and receive all our impressions under the influence of the evil one. These are, doubtless, the aggravations, but they are not the essence of our trial. "We know," if I may borrow the energetic statement of a master in Israel, who, being dead, yet speaketh to the Church of God, "we know, or our ignorance is wilful, that there is a God; we know that he demands the obedience of faith to the Lord Jesus Christ; we know that Satan is a liar, and the father of it. Then what is he, that we should listen to him? He is no more part of our substance than God is. Our refusal of God's demands therefore is not of necessity, but of will; and for that choice we must give account. Is God to make concessions to our self-made difficulties? Is he to say, 'Yes, there is evidence; my demands are just; the creature ought to hear and obey me; but my enemy hath been beforehand with me?' He knows nothing of this enemy as an inmate and accepted counsellor; he knows him only as one whom he hath appointed to try man, as every accountable creature must be tried; if he is more than this outward tempter, it is because man has opened the door to him. Does the master excuse the delinquency of his servant because he has formed some base connexion which seduces him from his due fidelity? Does the king count it venial in his minister, that he betrays his

honour through the influence of a traitorous correspondence with foreigners? So neither does God recede from his righteous demands upon man, because he has made himself vile. He deals with him as what he made him; demands of all what it becomes all to yield; gives sufficient evidence to all that such is his demand, even as he has given to all faculties, which if exercised, cannot but appreciate his demands correctly; and resents refusal in all, because all who refuse enter the lists with him as an adversary. It is the misapprehension of man's powers, and the misplacing of the devil's agency, which has blinded man to the equity of God's universal sentence against the wicked."*

The equity of this sentence will be still more abundantly proved by the long interval which precedes the judgment, and which, by affording to man every variety of advantage for his trial which he could desire or conceive, silences all complaint of hardship or injustice. Does the untaught barbarian murmur that he was denied the privilege of a revelation from heaven? Not only is he convicted of unfaithfulness to the law of reason and conscience, but he witnesses the heavier doom of Chorazin and Bethsaida, where *the people that had walked in darkness saw a great light, but repented not.* Does a rebel of the antediluvian or patri-

* Vaughan's Sermons on Matt. xi. p. 191.

archal ages complain of the feeble ray that shone upon the darkness of his times? Lo! the cry is heard, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.* But the Judge shall say, *I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Is it replied, "True, we heard the sound of the Gospel, but under circumstances how unfavourable to our reception of it! The sin of our first parent had brought us under the captivity of Satan; we were shapen in wickedness, and in sin did our mother conceive us." The remembrance of Adam's innocence and fall silences *this* complaint. Perhaps they rejoin that, had they been left to the free exercise of their inherent powers, with no temptation from without, and with examples attracting them to good instead of repelling them from it, the habits and principles of virtue would have become so strong as to carry them successfully through the severest trial. The answer is given from the lake of fire, teeming with those infatuated multitudes of the millennial age, on whom fire had come down from God out of heaven and devoured them.* "Ours was the trial, from which you suppose you would have escaped unhurt. Surrounded by every proof of God's unbounded goodness; living on the earth when delivered from its curse, though not

* Rev. xx. 9.

without its warnings of preceding judgment;* left to the free exercise of our faculties, with every aid to their improvement; we continued happy and virtuous until we were tried. But at length Satan was loosed; he tempted us, and fired our minds with the desire of independence. We fell; and our doom is a monument to the universe, that faculties of the highest order, knowledge of the widest extent, habits strengthened by the longest exercise, can of themselves afford no security to the creature against the wiles of the devil."

What, then, is that condition in which man will not have been tried? First, in a state of unsullied purity; then fallen, and under the dominion of the tempter, but with adequate means of escape; and lastly, during the cohibition of the tempter, and with every external advantage for the exercise of his inherent powers; in all these states he will have been tried and found wanting. And thus *every mouth is stopped*, and God is *justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged*.

It only remains that we briefly suggest a few of the **USES** to which the consideration of this awful subject should lead us.

The *first*, surely, is that of exciting us to a strict examination of our personal condition. What is there which can affect us, if the announcement of a

* Is. lxvi. 24.

judgment to come, with the detail of its circumstances and results, does not constrain us to inquire, Am I prepared to meet my God?

It is on the twofold issue of this judgment that our Church bases her most solemn warnings and her most animating encouragements. To the contemplation of that issue she directs our thoughts in the "Commination" with which this holy season commences; that, "remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, we may return unto our Lord God with all contrition and meekness of heart, bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of repentance." To give strength to her exhortation, she gathers from the Word of God the most awful descriptions of the judgment, its character and end. She reminds us of the short and uncertain period of our probation, and the dreadful consequences of that day finding us unprepared. And shall the effect of this warning be weakened by the thought that we may be sleeping in the dust at that day, and not hear the voice that shall awake the dead at the Lord's advent? O! be assured, that sleep will be one, not of repose, but of terror and anticipated torment! And what though it shall be unbroken for a thousand years? The moment must at last come, when we are compelled to stand before *the great white*

throne, and to see that face from which the earth and the heaven flee away and there is found no place for them.

But listen again to the Church, while, to encourage our return to him "who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners," she presents to our faith and hope the judgment of the blessed — "This if we do, Christ will deliver us from the curse of the law, and from the extreme malediction which shall light upon them that shall be set on the left hand; and he will set us on his right hand, and give us the gracious benediction of his Father, commanding us to take possession of his glorious kingdom."*

If, then, by the grace of God, and through that faith which is of his operation, we have obtained the justification of our persons, and so are free from condemnation, let us strive to give effect to these pious intentions of our Church, and, not content with barely ascertaining our safety, seek the highest places in the Redeemer's kingdom. For what purpose are we told of the "ruler over ten cities," of "one star exceeding another star in glory," of "those who turn many to righteousness shining as the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever," but to stimulate our ambition of bringing the largest revenue of praise to Him who in that day is to be *admired in*

* Commination Service.

his saints, and glorified in all them that believe ; who hath bought us with his blood, and sanctified us with his Spirit, in order that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works ?

The *second* use is, that of giving activity to our exertions for others.

Is the result of this judgment the eternal exclusion of the wicked from the presence of the Lord, and their eternal consignment to *the lake of fire, to the worm which dieth not, the fire which shall not be quenched* ? Is it true that the subjects of this judgment are the myriads of human kind ? and are these myriads giving the most appalling proofs that they are living in sin, either *without law, or under the law* ? And is it true, that on this short interval of probation their everlasting doom is suspended ? Then, with what eager haste, with what untiring zeal, should we, who have been delivered from the power of *the second death*, and raised to newness of life, hold forth the word of that life, and proclaim the mercies of our Deliverer ! Where is our faith, where our gratitude and love, if they do not call forth our note of warning, and give brightness to the lamp which we carry into the midst of surrounding darkness ? We have heard that there is a “more,” and a “less tolerable,” in the day of judgment ; and, if we can endure the thought of the myriads beaten with fewer stripes, because they

were comparatively ignorant of that law which they disobeyed; can we think with calmness of the multitudes who surround us, and, who, if they die unreclaimed, must be beaten with many, *because they knew not the day of their visitation?*

The *third* use is, that of preserving us from doctrinal error in some of those insidious forms which at the present day it assumes.

What is the *rule* of judgment? *The word that I have spoken*, says our Lord, *shall judge a man in the last day.* It is *Christ's* word, not *man's* word. Whenever, therefore, a doctrine is proposed to our acceptance, let us look narrowly to the authority on which it rests. Let us say, "I take that as the rule of my faith and of my life, which is to be the rule of my judgment." However venerable may be the sanction under which it comes; if not confirmed by the law and the testimony, let us reject it.

Again: *for what* shall we be judged? *For the things done in the body.* The actions of the life, whatever they were, written in the book of God's remembrance, of memory, and of conscience, shall *then* be brought into judgment. What possible room, then, for a purgatorial cleansing of the soul in its intermediate state? What conceivable opportunity for reforming what has been amiss, and recovering the unrighteous and polluted to rectitude

and purity, when once the period of probation is completed? *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.**

And, finally, my brethren, let the purity and omniscience of him who sits on "the great white throne," and the breadth and spirituality of that law which shall be the rule of judgment, remind us of the utter worthlessness of all external and ceremonial observances, if unaccompanied with inward holiness. The poor publican, who would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me, a sinner*, went down to his house justified, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee, who boasted of the multitude and exactness of his outward services: and that justification shall be confirmed and vindicated *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.*† It will then be seen that "baptism" is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God;" that communion with Christ, in his highest ordinance, is not the "visibly and carnally pressing with the teeth"‡ the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, but the *spiritual* participation of the sacred elements; and that *God, who is a spirit*, seeketh, approveth, justifieth, glorifieth, those only who *worship Him in spirit and in truth.*§

* Rev. xxii. 11. † Rom. ii. 16. ‡ Augustine.

§ John iv. 23, 24.

LECTURE XI.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST THE LORD IN ITS SUCCESSIVE STAGES AND IN ITS HEAVENLY GLORIES.

BY THE REV. E. BICKERSTETH,
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REV. XXI. 22, 23, 24.

“ And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

THE consideration of the heavenly kingdom of Christ our Lord is the subject which has been appointed for this evening. I deeply feel that the full glory of that kingdom is really unutterable,

and that there is an impossibility of attaining, in our present state, the just comprehension of all its excellence. Yet is the subject worthy of constant contemplation. May we set our affections on things above! May the Holy Spirit himself be our great Teacher, showing us things to come.

The previous lectures have brought before you the course of God's providence till the final act of judgment. The prophet, in the ninth verse of this chapter, begins a new vision, and carries us forward into eternity, and opens a boundless scene of everlasting glory. In the preceding vision of the judgment, after the sea has given up the dead, and not only the righteous, but the wicked, have stood before Christ in judgment, all things are made new, and the apostle declares, *I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.* This clearly distinguishes it both from the present state of things and from the millennial kingdom, where the sea remains till the judgment.

We have, then, a new vision opening out to us the heavenly Jerusalem and its eternal blessedness. An angel comes unto the apostle, and tells him, *Come hither, and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.* This bride is then represented to him under the figure of a city. The city is described as *that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of*

heaven from God, in its completed grandeur ; and the remainder of this last vision of this book reveals the eternal happiness of the saints and the full manifestation of Jehovah's glory. The words of this vision form a suitable close to the whole course of prophecy, and crown the revelations of God to the sons of men.

Before entering on this wonderful vision, it will be profitable first to review the grand outlines of God's providence, as set before us in the Word of prophecy, and then to consider more fully the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

Our subject is so peculiarly and eminently heavenly and glorious, that the due contemplation of it cannot fail deeply to humble us. When Isaiah saw the heavenly glory, he cried out, *Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips* ; and not till a live coal from off the altar had touched his lips, and so taken away his iniquity and purged his sin, did he offer himself to go on his mission to Israel.

In commencing, then, this subject, I desire to acknowledge before you, and to impress on my own heart and yours, our entire dependence on Divine teaching to enable me to give, and you to receive right instruction in these heavenly truths. Let us enter into the full meaning and force of that inspired writing, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,*

neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Let us also be encouraged by the following assurance:—*But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* Let us be quickened by such a blessed truth to the most fervent prayer for the constant teaching of the Holy Ghost.

I would, looking for his grace, endeavour to unfold—

1. The successive stages of Christ's kingdom.
2. The eternal glory which is here described.

1. THE SUCCESSIVE STAGES OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

The whole design of God in redemption is summed up by the apostle in the beginning of the Epistle to the Ephesians: *His good pleasure which he purposed in himself was, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.* But in this great work there are distinct eras, each marked by its own character; but all tending to the final issue of blessedness. We may distinguish four of these eras or successive stages.

1. THE TIME OF EXPECTATION.—This era comprehends the time from the creation to the first

advent, or from the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent, given in Eden, to its personal fulfilment in him who was born of the virgin. This was the great hope of patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. Thus our Lord testified of Abraham to the Jews, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.* Thus Jacob on his death-bed describes his state of mind, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord. To him give all the prophets witness. The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.* Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Anna and others were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. John the Baptist, as the messenger, was sent to prepare the way of Christ; and he everywhere preached, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Thus for 4,000 years the world was preparing for the first advent. Moses wrote of Christ. David in the Psalms foretold him. The Scriptures testified of him. *And when the fulness of time was come God sent forth his Son.* Thus for 4,000 years there was a time of expectation.

2. THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM, from the first to the second advent, is the next distinct era to be noticed. The King was manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnate Saviour had now been

revealed on earth; he had fulfilled the law in our nature; he had offered himself *a sacrifice for our sins*; he had risen again for our justification; he had poured out on his Church the gifts of his own Spirit, and had sent that Spirit to be the Advocate and Comforter of his people during his own personal absence. The time of open glory, in this period, is not yet come: but a mighty work has to be wrought on earth in gathering from age to age the Church of the first-born and preparing them for their full adoption, and the visible kingdom of God yet to be established. This is often mentioned in the Scripture as the kingdom of heaven, being the first or preparatory form of the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom distinct from the world, and founded on spiritual and heavenly principles by Christ the Lord of all. *All power*, said our Lord on his ascension, *is given unto me in heaven and earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations*. The kingdom of heaven, thus founded on his ascension, is said to be *like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs*. This kingdom, in its most important sense, is invisible to the eye of sense, and discerned only by faith. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

(Luke xvii. 20, 21.) It is the entire and joyful submission of the heart unto God, *Thy people shall be made willing in the day of thy power.* It is inward holiness and happiness, *The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* It is the calm sovereignty of peace over all our disordered affections, *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called, in one body, and be ye thankful.* It is a real victory over the power of Satan, *If I,* said our Lord, *by the Spirit of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.* The power and strength of this kingdom has already begun to be manifested in the subjugation of the enemies of Christ and the progressive increase of his truth. We may see it in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, *The king sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.* It is, in short, the reign of grace over sin, in the midst of a world of sinners, *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In these things you see the nature and character of this kingdom marking its reality, power, and blessedness. Its peculiar features are, the exaltation in heaven of Christ, *the King of saints and of nations,* seated above on his Father's throne (Rev. iii. 21); from thence he sends gifts on his

people, providential judgments on his enemies, by which their power is overthrown and their wrath restrained; his regal power is exercised over the hearts of his people, who are made willing to render to him a glad service; and, in the midst of all its many enemies, the Gospel still proceeds with fresh conquests and victories, preparing the way for the final triumph of the Redeemer.

3. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM is a farther era to be noticed.

This is singled out for distinct observation in different parts of the Word of God. It is a time of transition from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory, and partakes of the features of both those kingdoms. It is a state of probation to men upon earth, and a beginning of assured blessedness to the saints of the resurrection.

There are two main characters of this period.

(1.) IT IS A TIME OF PUTTING DOWN ALL THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST by the visible exercise of judgment. The apostle thus sets it before us in the Epistle to the Corinthians: *They that are Christ's shall be made alive at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is*

death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. Everything that opposes itself to Christ will be brought into complete subjection, all his enemies shall be confounded and wholly subdued. The same visible exercise of judgment is predicted in the 19th and 20th chapters of Revelation, and more especially in the binding of Satan for 1,000 years. Who can tell the happy effects of such an entire removal, for such a season, of all the temptations of him who has so long been the god of this world, and led its millions captive at his will? The Lord's victory over Satan, and his confinement for such a lengthened period, must make the millennial kingdom very glorious. But besides this, there is the open exercise of judgment in the supreme dominion of the saints, as we see in the declaration: *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ*

a thousand years. Thus a special honour is put upon the faithful servants of Christ in this world, the scene of their shame and reproach, their sorrows and their sufferings, and what an accession of happiness and glory will this part of the judgment give! Yet, notwithstanding all, we have at the close of this reign human wickedness bursting forth again, and thence the loosing of Satan again out of his prison for a short period, his deceiving the nations on the earth afresh, his war against the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And upon this he is put down for ever. We have distinctly described to us his destruction by fire,—the final judgment of all the dead,—the casting of *death and hell into the lake of fire*, with all those *whose names are not written in the book of life*. Such is the complete subjugation of all the enemies of Christ, and the visible exercise of judgment by Christ and his saints reigning with him during the *millennial kingdom*.

(2.) It is also A SEASON OF SPECIAL EXALTATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST UPON THIS OUR EARTH. It is frequently predicted in this view. Thus the apostle tells the Hebrews, *When he bringeth in again the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.* Our Lord told the Jews, *As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth*

whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. This time of judgment will be the time when special honour and glory shall be given by all creation to that Son, even similar to that which is given to the Father. In this view, the apostle in the Hebrews not only declares, that all the angels shall worship him, but contrasts the glory of angels with the far higher glory of the Son. They are his ministers: *but unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.* He further contrasts the glory of angels and that of the Son, exalting Christ far above every name that is named in heaven or earth. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.* Such is the glorious

exaltation of our Lord Christ in the very world where he was mocked and crowned with thorns, spit upon, and crucified. At his coming, on his return to our earth, *there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* And so our Lord Jesus shall be specially exalted and honoured in that which was the scene of his humiliation and abasement. Of this glory the risen saints shall partake. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.* They shall be *kings and priests unto God and the Father, and live and reign with Christ a thousand years.*

Such, my brethren, is the millennial kingdom, the first stage in the resurrection glory, and full happiness of the children of God.

4. THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM is the final consummation of our blessedness. *Then cometh the end.* After the last judgment of the wicked, *when the dead, small and great, stand before God,* and are judged according to their works, and the destruction of death the last enemy; for *death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire*; then the new heavens and new earth are completed, and the

saints of the Most High reign for ever and ever. The special dominion of the Son in the millennial kingdom will then be laid aside; the great object of it in the subjugation of all his enemies and his special exaltation in the scene of his humiliation having been accomplished. As the Son of David, in glorified humanity, he continues to reign for ever. As the Son of God, one with the Father, he for ever shares in the worship of the redeemed creation to the invisible Godhead. But the mediatorial kingdom being no longer needed, *the Son himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the heavenly Jerusalem; and the glory of the Father and of the Son inseparably combined together through eternity. Here is the last stage of the kingdom of Christ, which we will now proceed more fully to unfold.*

II. THE ETERNAL GLORY HERE DESCRIBED.

I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light

of it : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

That this description relates to the eternal state we judge from the order of the prophecy. In the close of the last vision, the apostle had seen a new heaven and a new earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. This follows the last judgment, when we are told the sea gave up the dead which were in it. It has been supposed, because it was stated in the 19th chapter, that the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready, that the description of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in this chapter must apply to the same time. But this is no real objection to this last vision applying to the eternal state. The kingdom of David, with the conquest of the enemies of Israel, came first, and afterwards the reign of Solomon : yet both David and Solomon were clear types of our Lord. So the company of saints in these visions first appear as *armies of heaven* (Rev. xix. 14), and share with Christ in the subjugation of his enemies, before they are fully revealed in the peaceful glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, the mansion or city of peace. (Rev. xxi. 10.)

Three glorious features are embodied in this description.

1. THE UNVEILED PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB.

I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

While we are on earth and in our present state, distinctions of place and time in worship are needed. The Gospel frees us from the bondage of a self-righteous observance of them, but does not set them aside as means of grace and helps to communion with God. But in this final glory the Church triumphant is raised above all these outward forms and distinctions into direct and immediate fellowship with God. O! what tongue can tell, what mind conceive, the clearness, the fulness, the joy, the rich variety of blessings then to be attained.

Let us try to get some glimpse of what the Scriptures unveil. Think of their LONG PREPARATION, even from the beginning. They were in the mind and purpose of God from eternity. When our Lord bids his saints take possession, he says, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* The names of those who inherit this kingdom were *written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* They were *chosen in Christ before the world was.* And, for 6,000 years since, the Lord has been

gathering and preparing the lively stones for this building; for 6,000 years, infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love, have been preparing for its blessedness and glories. The vastness of the preparations, the all-sufficiency of him who prepares, the time in which he has been at work, show that we cannot conceive of it too highly.

The excellence of the foretaste already, in THE PRESENT EXPERIENCE of Christians, assures us of the full blessedness yet to come. The Holy Spirit of promise is now *the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*. The kingdom of God already *is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Christians know now the comfort of forgiven iniquity through the blood of Jesus; they glory in his blood and righteousness alone; they have received of his Holy Spirit; they have already tasted *that the Lord is good*; the light of his love has shed joy in their souls; they have experienced the consolation that is in Christ; they know the sweet feelings of love to others, and the happiness of making them happy; communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, has filled them with holy delight; they would not exchange such joys for all that the world calls good or great. Amidst all their trials and temptations, reproaches and difficulties, they can *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. What, then, must be

the fulness of joy, when every sorrow shall flee away, and every joy be perfected and eternal?

Think yet farther of **THE FULL LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE** there obtained. *Now we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.* It is plain from these promises, that our knowledge will be unspeakably increased. All those capacities which God has given us for knowing and delighting in him, and his works and his ways, will be enlarged and filled; fresh light given, and then fresh love continually growing and increasing for ever. All that is now difficult and obscure, that is now dark and apparently hard and severe, will be cleared up and manifested in its true character of light and love. All that is now mysterious to us will only be found to be the deeper counsels of wisdom and goodness. *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

Think again of the **PERFECTION OF HOLINESS** there bestowed upon us. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Not one unclean thing there. All sin for ever abolished. Nothing that defiles there. *Then shall I be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness; pure as he is pure;*

holy as he is holy ; merciful as God is merciful ; perfect as he is perfect ; all the fair beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon us for ever. This inward likeness to God will be joined to a spiritual body raised in power, in glory, in incorruption, like the glorified body of Jesus ; celestial, and fully capable of partaking with the purified soul of all its holy joys and happy dominion.

Think, once more, as the consummation of all, that, in this unveiled presence of God and of the Lamb, there will be the COMMUNION OF INFINITE AND EVERLASTING LOVE. The love which a parent has to a child, provided for in all its helplessness, often rescued from imminent danger, trained up from its infancy, and fitted for usefulness and happiness, how tender and endeared it is ! such delight has the Father, and such delight has the Son in each of his redeemed children. The perfect confidence and love of an affectionate child, rejoicing in the smiles of a beloved and revered Father, how precious it is ! but, O ! how all these figures must fall short of this heavenly communion ! Even *here, he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him ;* and, I trust, many of us have tasted all the peace, and heavenly mindedness, and joy of such blessed feelings ; but, O ! how soon are they disturbed by temptations and trials of this life ! But *there* love is the universal atmosphere of the whole

heavenly kingdom. *God is love*, and his people partake of this his Divine nature for ever. O ! dear brethren, the full flow, the full joy of love ! It is even now the most delightful thing God gives us here below. But to be in it and have it in us ; to live in the constant assurance of unceasing love, without one partial, one selfish, one vain, one sinful feeling ; to be ever in the presence, the fellowship, the participation of all the joy of the most powerful, wise, holy, and good one, the most excellent of all beings, and the most beloved of all objects ; basking in the full beams of heavenly love, and diffusing those beams to others more and more : this is to experience that *the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of the heavenly Jerusalem*. We are one in him and he in us. One in sharing glory, and one in partaking of his own blessedness, realizing to the full the promise and the prayer of the Redeemer, *the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*. The very title, the Lord God Almighty, shows the all-sufficiency, the covenant security, and the omnipotence, by which this blessedness is assured. The union with this title of that of the Lamb on the throne shows, also, the Divine glory of Jesus ; and that all this bliss is provided through an infinite and all-sufficient

atonement, and in no other way, for sinful creatures like us. Oh! let us pant after this as our only proper rest; the full and all-satisfying portion of our souls.

2. THE HEAVENLY CITY ITSELF.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

The city here spoken of is symbolical: the account of it as being 12,000 furlongs in length, breadth, and height; as well as other particulars, clearly manifests the figurative character of the description. It signifies *the general assembly and Church of the first-born*; the true Church catholic, in contrast to her spurious counterpart, the mystical Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. This heavenly city is thus described in the Epistle to the Hebrews:—*Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born.*

A visible glory constantly rests upon this city. As when Moses had been in the mount his face shone with the glory which he had witnessed; as on the mount of transfiguration *the face of Jesus did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*, so shall the saints in their resurrection glory

shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The symbols describing this city in the preceding part of the chapter are not exclusive of literal allusions ; but we may see in them that the choicest gifts of creation will be then centred upon the redeemed of God, to add to their glory and blessedness.

In this description we may learn **THE PERFECT COMMUNION** which there will be in all parts of this heavenly society. *The city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth ; and the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.* It is builded as a city that is compact and complete in itself ; no jarring, envy, jealousy, or pride, even for a moment, have place within its borders ; no breach in the walls, no unhewn stone or untempered mortar in its building. No ; there is the blending together in entire unity of all saints, however named here below, of every age, of every clime, of every tongue, of every period, from the creation to the return of the Lord in glory, and that in mutual joy and perfect felicity. All, all are one in the Father and the Son, and that for ever. *The names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel* are on the gates ; and *the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb* are in the twelve foundations of the wall of the city. Oh ! the full joy and perfection of this union, and

the enduring blessedness of this everlasting fellowship !

From this description we may also gather THE ABUNDANCE OF SPIRITUAL GRACE. All that is precious, beautiful, honourable, and lovely, selected from all lands, brought out from the most hidden recesses or the most distant regions, is there gathered together. All manner of precious stones, pure gold, pearls, and clear glass, are there. Everything that is rare, excellent, and valuable of grace and goodness in all past ages in the souls of God's people will there be assembled, perfected, and fully manifested. All opposite and contrasted graces will then be shining forth in perfect harmony and beauty; *the jasper stone clear as crystal ; the city pure gold like unto clear glass ; every several gate one pearl ;* each foundation a precious stone of distinct beauty, and perfect in its kind and excellence. If the figures be thus glorious, what a glory must there be in the completed reality !

We learn, further, from this description that ANGELIC INTERCOURSE will be another part of its glory. The city had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. Thus we may see we are there joined to the angelic host; in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *We come to the innumerable company of angels ;* in the language of our Lord, *They that are counted worthy of that glory are equal*

to the angels ; they dwell with them, intermingling in their happy and glorious company for ever. Now the angels are rejoicing in each repenting sinner added to the heavenly choir ; now they are ministering spirits, ministering to the heirs of salvation. Oh ! what unfoldings will there be in our communion and converse with them hereafter of all this ministry ; all the watchful care, all the needful help, all the deliverances from evil, all the suggestions of good ! and what streams of love and joy will thus pour in on our enraptured souls through eternity !

But the fulness of joy is yet higher and deeper, broader and longer : it passes knowledge. It is THE DIRECT AND OPEN VISION OF GOD in his glory. Earthly glories are no longer needed now that this glory is manifested. *They have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.* Heaven's own light, in pure and perfect day, makes needless the brightest present and earthly displays of light and glory. When the Lord himself is present these displays of his glory become needless ; when the Church itself is perfected and visible in its resurrection glory its fairest and most beautiful emblems are not required. *The glory of God lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* It was the greatest privilege of the Jewish high priest, for a transient period, once in the year to enter into the

Holiest of Holies, and behold there a glorious manifestation of God. This will be our portion in a fuller glory, and that unceasingly and for ever. The Lamb will be the light of that temple, not only as having himself redeemed all for it, but as himself unfolding to us the glorious character of our God, and himself forming one grand theme of all our songs and praise. With what joy shall we traverse through all the heights, and lengths, and depths, and breadths of Divine love, and mark all the fountains which supply those streams of grace and love that gladden all creation! How will each attribute and perfection of God, and the wonders of his past providence, and the riches of his present love, and the exhaustless provision for yet unknown and endless blessings, continually furnish us with fresh springs of joy! As they are laid open to our admiring souls by the Lamb *which is in the midst of the throne*, feeding us and leading us unto these *living fountains*, they will cause us again and again to burst out with exulting exclamations of glad surprise, *Who is a God like unto thee? in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* How will the opening out, and the full shining upon us, of those bright and blessed truths, in the Scripture the last recorded descriptions of our God, *God is light, and God is love*, swell the universal song! All the redeemed

and angelic host will through eternity rejoice in singing, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.*

But is all this bliss and glory selfishly confined to the heavenly regions? are the joys of doing good to others in need of our help lost to us there? Is there no provision made for the exercise of those gracious habits of mercy and goodness which God has taught all his children here below?

It is not so. Let us proceed to consider another remarkable part of our subject.

3. THE NATIONS WHO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THIS CITY.

The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

This, it may be allowed, is a mysterious part of our subject, but little known and thought of, but little considered and understood by the Church in this day. Yet it is not dimly revealed in the Word of God. The common conception among Christians has often been as if the redeeming love of God was exhausted in the company of the elect who meet the Lord at his appearing, and are, thenceforth, ever with the Lord. But a deeper and closer search into the Scriptures reveals a further mystery of Divine goodness. The words of

our text here clearly teach us that there are nations on earth who walk in the light of the city, as distinct from the city itself; that there are kings over those nations, and that they bring their glory and honour to it.* This is a deeply mysterious but unspeakably magnificent truth. Let us mark its harmony with other parts of Divine truth.

1. ITS CONSISTENCY WITH THE EVENTS OF JUDGMENT.

If the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and the general judgment of all men took place at one time and in the same day, none would, none could be left, as the heads and parents of a redeemed people on earth. But the Holy Scriptures reveal to us a progress in judgment, and that the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked are clearly distinct in time. There is the first resurrection of the saints at the commencement of the millennium, and after the thousand years the rest of the dead live and are judged.

At the return of the Lord Jesus to our earth, the saints are raised and changed, and meet the Lord in the air, and are judged according to their works, as the Redeemer promises, *Behold, I come*

* "We must distinguish between the state of the new Jerusalem and the state of the nations which shall walk in the light thereof. They shall not be both one, but much differing."—Mede, 772.

quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. Each is welcomed with those joyful words, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* This takes place at the time of the first resurrection.

When the saints have thus been translated to their glory, no believers are left upon the earth; *darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.* The great day of the Lord's wrath is upon all nations. It is the season of righteous judgment; the time of *the great tribulation; the third woe.* The solemn language of Isaiah thus describes the course of this judgment: *Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. The curse hath devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.* The enmity of the wicked, after the resurrection and translation of the saints, seems to be chiefly directed against the part of the Jewish nation which, restored to their own land, trusts in the law of Moses, and has not received the true Messiah. This brings upon them those heavy judgments so

often predicted in the Word of God. The judgments fall first on the Jewish nation, and then on the apostate nations; the people of Israel behold the pierced Saviour, and repent; and many of the Gentiles *remember and turn unto the Lord*, and are spared and preserved; and they, thus delivered, form the inhabitants on our earth during the millennial kingdom, who are subject to Christ and his saints. Thus, in the midst of the *judgments in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*, and all shall finally yield avowed subjection to God. The subjection during the millennium not being indeed a complete and full subjection of the heart to him, the corruption of man will, at its close, have a yet farther manifestation. During the millennium the faithful are mingled with those who only yield a feigned obedience, as we see predicted in the close of the prophecies, both of Isaiah (lxv. 20) and Zechariah (xiv. 17—19). The last rebellion after the millennium is distinctly described in the Book of Revelation: *When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, God and Magog, to gather them together to battle.* The objects of their enmity are the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and the extent of the

rebellion affects the whole earth. *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.* The camp of the saints, therefore, and the beloved city, are protected and delivered by the immediate interposition of God, just as before the millennium the Jewish nation in part, and many of the Gentiles, had been delivered. This last open apostasy of the wicked finally separates all the unbelievers, and removes them from the earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. They are first slain by fire, and afterwards raised with the rest of the wicked dead for judgment. But no change is then mentioned as passing on the Jewish nation or on the living righteous, who continue faithful to God, as in the translation of the saints before the millennium. The object of the rebellion, to overthrow the camp of the saints and the beloved city, fails of its design. God protects them. The living righteous, then, after the millennium, may yet continue a seed to serve God, and in successive generations be trained up for heavenly glory.

The doctrine of our text is therefore clearly consistent with the events of judgment, as elsewhere described in the Word of God.

2. ITS TRUTH IS ALSO DISTINCTLY REVEALED in many testimonies of Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testament. A few proofs will show this:—

The covenant with Noah was *an everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth for perpetual generations*. The covenant with Abraham is called by the Psalmist *the word which he commanded to a thousand generations*. *Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.* (Ps. cv.) The land of Canaan was given to them as an everlasting possession. (Gen. xvii.) So Moses describes the Lord *as keeping covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations*. This period of a thousand generations, thus repeatedly mentioned, would reach far beyond the close of the millennium.

The promise made in Isaiah concerning the kingdom of Christ and his reigning on the throne of David are in the strongest expressions of never-ending continuance: *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from*

henceforth even for ever. The same promise of perpetuity is often given to the people of Israel. Two testimonies from the Old Testament, from many similar ones, may show this. *Thy people shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.* (Isa. lx. 21.) Corresponding with this is that very full and clear promise in Ezekiel (xxxvii. 25—28), *And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt ; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever : and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them ; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them : and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them : yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the Heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.* The plain and obvious meaning of such passages would lead us to the conclusion of a continuance both of Israel and Gentile nations in a state of righteousness on our earth. The consistency of this with the last fire described in St. Peter, and the new

heavens and the new earth afterwards to come forth, is explained in statements in the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah predicting these events. It is first said, *The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner*; and yet it is afterwards added in the same prophecy, *I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.* (See also Isa. liv. 7—10.) So in a later prophecy in the same book it is said, *Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.* Thus remarkable are the proofs in the Old Testament of the perpetual continuance of the Jewish nation on our earth.

In the New Testament we have many similar promises. The angel from heaven, in announcing the miraculous conception of the Divine Redeemer to his virgin mother, declares, *The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*;

and of his kingdom there shall be no end. The apostle closes his prayer for the Ephesians by leading us to the same wonderful fact of a perpetual continuance of the Church on earth. *Unto God be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end; or, as it might be rendered, throughout all the generations of the age of ages* (εἰς πᾶσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων). The apostle James, speaking of believers, says, *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.* (James i. 18.) Thus the Christian Church is described as only the first-fruits of a glorious harvest yet to be reaped from our earth. So in the description in the Hebrews of the future glory and of the heavenly society partaking of it, there is not only the *general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven*, but the *spirits of just men made perfect*, which seems to refer to those gathered after the number of the Church of the first-born is completed.

3. The promises to the Church, scattered through the Scriptures, of REIGNING HEREAFTER OVER THE EARTH furnish another proof of the perpetual continuation of men living in the flesh on our earth. Thus Daniel, in one of the strongest expressions of perpetuity in the Scriptures, says, *The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom,*

and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Our Lord thus assures the twelve apostles and all his faithful followers, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (Matt. xix. 28, 29.) St. Paul frequently brings forward this truth, Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels. (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.) He tells Timothy, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. The same thing is frequently mentioned in the Book of Revelation; two passages may suffice: Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (v. 10.) The Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Here, then, are the true kings of the earth who bring their glory and honour into the heavenly Jerusalem. From every part of a redeemed earth they are continually gathering tribute to swell the full tide of heavenly joy, and increase the triumphant chorus of those eternal hallelujahs, which the

works and ways, the grace and goodness, the bounties and loving-kindness of the one God and Father of all, will, through eternity, occasion to his happy creatures.

In these things you may see the scriptural illustration of my text: *The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of the heavenly Jerusalem : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

OH, HOW VAST, THEN, AND GLORIOUS IS THE PLAN OF HUMAN REDEMPTION ! If we look at the superior glory of those who have, through the 6,000 years that our world has existed, honoured God by believing his truth and living according to his will, how infinitely desirable is their portion ! Think of them as invested with a heavenly sovereignty through eternity. Think of them as shining *as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.* You will then enter into the ardour of the apostle's feelings: *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: . . . that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. . . . This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are*

before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You will see why Moses counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of reward ; and why all the patriarchs desired a better country, that is, an heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.

But this is but one part of the full purposes of God's wisdom. For he means, also, by Christ, to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. The holy angels have themselves an intense interest in human redemption : *which things the angels desire to look into.* All are to see *what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Nor merely affects it heaven and earth. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and it is ordained that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He has the keys of hell and death. Even the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction,*

shall both *show his wrath and make his power known*; and illustrate for ever the evil of sin, in their being *an abhorring unto all flesh*. (Isa. lxvi. 24.)

But in those new heavens and that new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*, for which we look, when *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever*, will be the unceasing, the eternal displays of the glories of his goodness. *Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all the generations of the age of ages. In the dispensation of the fulness of times he will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth; even in him.* We are now in spirit raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. We, ourselves, blessed, and made a blessing to others for ever. We enjoying the unspeakable blessing of communicating constant streams of benefits and happiness as *kings and priests unto God and the Father, reigning over the earth* to accomplish all his designs of goodness in a new creation; which he will once more pronounce to be altogether good, with a goodness which shall never more be marred nor interrupted.

Such is the vast and glorious scheme of human

redemption. Such is the eternal kingdom of Christ the Lord. It is fixed and unchangeable: *there shall be no more sea*. Probably, no literal sea; certainly, no troubled sea of disquieted and wicked men. Three-fourths of our world are now taken up by the uncertain waves of the tumultuous ocean; but then the Prince of Peace reigns; *of the increase of his Government and peace there shall be no end. There shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.*

We must hasten to consider THE PRACTICAL LESSONS WHICH THIS SUBJECT TEACHES.

1. We may learn to BEWARE OF A WORLDLY SPIRIT. This spirit has been the temptation of men living in this world in all ages. Faith alone gives us victory over the world. Secularity, or love of the world, is the grand temptation of the Church at this time. It enters into religion, and religion becomes sensuous; and we glory in music and architecture, and dress and outside show, and form; instead of the life, the spirit, and the power of godliness.

We think to prevail by talent and influence and human means, instead of by the truths of the Gospel, and the preaching those truths, *not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. This worldly spirit enters into our faith, and then our faith ceases to

be a simple reliance on the Word of God, and requires human authority and traditions and consent of divines to prop up its weakness. The traditional spirit, so far as it prevails, is a cover of unbelief, under the affected mask of diffidence and humility. If we cannot obtain truth from Scripture, if that is an insufficient authority for us, it will necessarily lead to universal scepticism. This worldly spirit enters into our works, and then they become the works of a hireling, in a spirit of bondage; or the works of self-righteousness and human merit, in the vain notion of purchasing a reward from Him who has given us eternal life in Christ; and they cease to be the glad and grateful offerings of a free spirit and a redeemed soul, ever flowing from the faith and love of the Gospel. We see this secularity wholly prevailing in the world; to attain wealth is, with a large proportion, the great end of existence. In the very face of our Lord's declaration to the contrary, they think that a man's life consists *in the abundance of the things he possesses*; and, regardless of the sufferings of others, the spirit of emulation and love of this world hurries them into temptations and snares, *and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*. The poor lose, thus, that precious faith which is eminently their privilege, for *God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in*

faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him. The poor having no faith, waste their hard earnings by grovelling in reckless self-indulgence, such as they can get, to their own misery and that of their families. They are spent with cares *for what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed :* and not pursuing God's method of obtaining this, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, they become murmurers and complainers; speak evil of dignities, and are filled with a spirit of self-will and lawlessness, enmity, and insubordination. Thus one class of society has become alienated from another. The rich become hardened against the poor; they withdraw and diminish all help from them more and more; they exaggerate their faults, and justify their own selfish course as policy and wisdom, even towards the poor themselves. They more and more gratify themselves in luxurious indulgences at the very time they are stinting in everything those beneath them, and working to the utmost those dependant on them. O ! my brethren: *ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Hear how our Lord meets all this worldliness: *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it*

come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. If I believe the world is quickly passing away, and the lust thereof, and only he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever : If I believe that the heavens shall soon pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up : Looking for such things, I shall be diligent to be found of the Lord in peace, without spot, and blameless : I shall set my affections on things above, and not on things on the earth ; knowing that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. The blessed hope of his heavenly kingdom will be like the light of the sun at noon-day, which makes all artificial light needless, and extinguishes all lesser brightness in the full day of its own glory. If you are governed by a worldly spirit, depend upon it you have not Christ formed in you the hope of glory. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.

Let us hence be guarded against OPPOSITE DANGERS OF THESE PERILOUS TIMES. All this glory of which we have been speaking is reserved for the true children of God. It is their rich

reward for faithfulness to Christ in the midst of peculiar temptations to unfaithfulness. Such temptations there are in the present day. The extensive revival of pure religion has provoked, as it ever did, a tremendous reaction on the part of the god of this world. The unclean spirits are all abroad seeking to defile and pollute. Thus it was in the days of Christ. You have, in the New Testament, the key of much that, in the present state of things, seems mysterious, secret, and contradictory. When John the Baptist preached, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea. There was a great revival of religion. The chief priests and elders, indeed, would not own that his ministry was of God, but all the people held John to be a prophet. When our Lord's awakening ministry followed, his fame went throughout all Syria, and everywhere multitudes thronged to hear him. This provoked the wrath and envy of his enemies, and stirred them up to great exertions. But while Herodians, Pharisees, and Sadducees, were all really against Christ, they feared the people, and were opposed to each other. The Sadducees were the Infidels and Neologists of their day, rejecting the great peculiarities of Divine revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles interrupted their vain dreams of worldly pleasure

and enjoyment, and thence they became bitter, zealous, and inveterate opposers of his kingdom. The Pharisees were the superstitious of their day. When they saw the successful progress of the kingdom they were roused to wonderful exertions, compassing *sea and land to make one proselyte*. Our Lord and his true followers were not religious enough for them. They blamed them because they did not fast, wash, and keep the traditions of the elders. He himself was accounted by them *a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*. They themselves were, in their view, the only true Church. They said, *We know that God spake unto Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is*. They set aside God's Word for human traditions. But, when they determined to put down our Lord Christ, Herodians, Pharisees, and Sadducees, united with one accord, and prevailed also, to crucify the Lord of glory, and the people joined in the cry, *Crucify him!* The true followers of our Lord seem, at this time, to have been reduced to a few hundreds. Yet this faithful few was the beginning of the Christian Church, and from those that in the hour of danger deserted Christ, and even were among his worst enemies, he, in the riches of his grace, gathered a goodly multitude both of priests and people, adding to the Church daily

such as should be saved and be trophies of his loving-kindness for ever. The circumstances of our times in many respects are similar. God granted by his faithful servants, now gone to their rest and reward, a gracious revival of truth in his Churches. This has spread, and called forth from different classes of opponents great hostility. Severe temptations, such as his first faithful disciples passed through, seem now at hand. My brethren, if we would inherit this glory, we must keep the word of Christ patiently, and not deny his name; and oh! may he keep us faithful to him *in the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* Let us adhere to the Word of God, whether the Infidel seek to pervert it, or the superstitious to displace it by vain traditions. Oh! forget not that there was a great zeal for outward religion, and for their peculiar notions to the very last, in the zealots who perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Let us not then be deluded, either by philosophy falsely so called, or by the form of godliness, while the power is denied. Let us belong to the *little flock*, to whom it is the *Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom*, and be encouraged by the hope, that through our faithfulness God may yet gather, even from those who now most bitterly oppose his truth, multitudes who shall be everlastingly saved.

Let us also PREPARE FOR THE SOLEMN REALITIES OF THE JUDGMENT TO COME.

Everything we say or do affects our standing at that time. Each word and each act, each indulged secret of the heart, is like seed buried in the ground that will all spring forth afresh; its character will be manifested in the judgment, and its consequences affect us through eternity. It is not only important that we build on the foundation which is laid in Zion, Jesus Christ, but also that we place durable works there. *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. None will escape this judgment. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The judgment is infallibly certain to every human being. None will escape because of their greatness as above it, or because of their degradation as beneath it. None will escape because of*

their badness, as if their case were so self-evident as to render it needless, or because of their goodness, as if it were so manifest, that judgment did not concern them. God will make his equity and love, his righteousness and goodness, in all his dealings with all his creatures, manifest in that day to all creation. Oh solemn and awful day! when *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to his Gospel*. O Lord, thou wilt be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.

This day, then, is at hand. The judgment of the righteous takes place first; it is now very near. The time of judgment may come before; in the ordinary course of nature, the younger amongst us might die. Never could it be so emphatically said as now, *Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door*. Live, then, in the constant contemplation of this coming judgment. Act in the constant view of its solemn decisions. Dread, above all dread, being unprepared to meet your God. Desire, above all desire, to be ready for the coming of the Son of man. *For in such an hour as you think not, the cry will go forth, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him*.

MEDITATE ON THE VASTNESS OF THE GLORY

RESERVED FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. Many are the directions of Scripture to set our affections on things above; to *look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope. Our Lord himself, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and all the saints have thus had respect to the recompence of reward. We ought to know that we have eternal life. Thus shall we be enabled to be faithful amidst the faithless; loving amidst the selfish; bold amidst the timid; and decided for God when all are falling away; and yet, at the same time, with all that sympathy, tenderness, and compassion, which become those still in the body and subject to temptation, and often themselves falling. Oh, what a glory, dear brethren, may yet be ours! *The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*. It is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is so great, that Christ himself comes from heaven to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Think of our bodies, fashioned like unto his glorious body, spiritual, incorruptible, raised in power and in glory. Think of our inward man, perfectly conformed in every thought and wish, feeling and affection, to the holy, spiritual, heavenly, meek,

and loving mind of Jesus. Think of our being companions of such for ever. Think, then, of the direct communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in eternal glory; the angels our co-equals, the new heavens our eternal home; promoting the happiness of the new earth our own happy employment, and this for ever and ever. Oh! does not the heart pant after this, and amidst all the troubles and conflicts of this present scene, are we not often saying, *Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away, and be at rest:* Then shall *I sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:* Then shall I see the fathers of old, who lived before the deluge: Then shall I be with patriarchs, and judges, and righteous kings who followed; the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the holy Church throughout all the world are there. All I have loved in Christ below; all whose thoughts and works have proved they loved the Saviour, and have endeared them to my soul, will be there. Nor these alone. Then shall we realize the rapturous song which has so often below raised our souls to God, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud. The heavens, and all the powers therein. To thee

cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." This scene of bliss is before us; this glory is at hand. Meditate upon it. Live for it.

Once more, BEHOLD WITH ADORING ADMIRATION THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF THE LOVE OF GOD. The whole earth is indeed now *full of his goodness; so is the great and wide sea. The heavens declare his glory.* It is seen in every plant and flower, and in the whole face of creation; and the death of Jesus on the cross may solve all apparent contradictions to this love, and show us that there must be love in that which seems hardest and severest. But when we contemplate the heavenly glory, when we meditate on *the kingdom which he has prepared for them that love him*, surely our hearts must burn within us in the view of so much wholly unmerited loving-kindness. When we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we can *glory in tribulation also*, and experience the *hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* That he should be mindful of such sinful creatures as we have been; that he should redeem us at such a costly price as the blood of his Son; that when redeemed, having chosen us before the world began, he should call us, justify us, adopt us

into his family, sanctify us, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. That he should then, from the foundation of the world, prepare for us such a mansion, such a kingdom, such companions, such a glory, such a sovereignty, for ever and ever ! Oh how must our souls be lost in adoring admiration of such unsearchable riches of love ! How should we exult in our God, and glory in his holy name ! How should we love him who has so loved us, and go from the contemplation of this glory with joy and alacrity, now to take up our cross and follow Christ ; now cheerfully to submit to present burdens and trials ; now to fight the good fight of faith, to run with patience the race that is set before us, to keep the faith, to finish our course, and to lay hold on eternal life !

LECTURE XII.

THE DUTY OF PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS IN THE PROSPECT OF THE LORD'S COMING.

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REV. XVI. 15.

*"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that
watcheth, and keepeth his garments."*

THIS remarkable sentence is taken from a part of this interesting prophecy, which many approved expositors believe to be now receiving a partial accomplishment.

The text attracts our attention by the significant word with which it commences, "Behold;" an expression which, according to the idiom of the sacred Scriptures, is usually employed to usher in an event which merits peculiar notice. Thus, the angel who addressed the shepherds said to them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings

of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In the same manner, the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, "BEHOLD, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." So the Prophet Isaiah, "BEHOLD, the Lord hath proclaimed to the end of the earth, BEHOLD, thy salvation cometh; BEHOLD, his reward is with him, and his work before him." This word, therefore, may well excite our earnest regard, since it would not have been used, unless something of more than ordinary importance were to follow.

The text is still further remarkable from its singular position. It stands as a parenthesis in the midst of the pouring out of one of the most eventful of the vials of the wrath of God. For in the prophetic description of this vial, we are told, first, of the drying up of the great river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared; and we then read of the active energy of three unclean spirits like frogs, the spirits of devils working miracles, going forth unto the kings

of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

But, whilst the word by which the text is introduced, and the position in which it stands, may make it interesting, its chief attraction consists in this, that, if we may avail ourselves of such a simile, it may remind us of the shrill sound of the trumpet at the dawn of day—the “*la réveillée*,” or the morning call, to the troops—for it is a note of warning given by our blessed Saviour to awaken the slumbering members of his Church, and to prepare them for his near approach. It is also a word of encouragement graciously intended to strengthen the faith, animate the hope, quicken the zeal, and dissipate the fear of his faithful people. I have, therefore, selected this striking portion of Holy Writ, as peculiarly appropriate to the subject appointed for the concluding lecture of this series of discourses, which your much-esteemed and beloved minister has requested me to deliver. The appointed subject is, “The Duty of Watchfulness and Prayer in the Prospect of the Coming of our Lord;” a subject eminently practical, and one which proves that the object of the Lord’s servants who arranged the syllabus of this course was, not to proclaim any fanciful theory or speculative opinion, but, by the Divine blessing, to impress the hearers with that deep tone of piety which the

unveiling the future prospects of the Church is so well calculated to produce.

The distance from the metropolis at which I reside has prevented my having the privilege of hearing any of the preceding lectures; I am unable, therefore, to speak of their details; but of the great subject of the course, the coming of our Lord in glory and majesty, in its general features, surely, my beloved friends, we may say, bearing in mind his death and resurrection, if there be any one topic more than another calculated to solemnize the mind, to bring us as lowly suppliants to the Throne of Grace, and to lead to watchfulness and prayer, while at the same time it cheers and animates the spirit, filling it with that blessed hope, which led the Apostles, the army of martyrs, and, we may add, our Protestant forefathers, to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord." If there be any subject calculated to produce these blessed effects, it is "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Let me, then, entreat your silent but fervent prayers, that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be granted, while I attempt to open and improve the awakening announcement of our blessed

Lord,—“*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*”

Without entering into the other topics to which my text might give rise, allow me to call your attention, First, to THE SUDDENNESS of the advent of our Lord, “*Behold, I come as a thief;*” and, secondly, to HIS ENCOURAGING COUNSEL, “*Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*”

I. Observe the *suddenness* with which our Lord will come.

Here we may profitably notice how frequently and how emphatically this stirring fact is declared in the Word of God. It would seem, as if the Holy Spirit, being fully aware of the tendency, even in sincere Christians, to forget the future return of the Lord, were for this reason desirous to impress upon the Church, in a manner the most awakening, the important truth, that He will come at a time when he is least expected. For, if we read the Holy Scriptures with attention, we shall see, that the illustrations employed to describe the second coming of the Son of man, are those which most clearly and strikingly manifest the *suddenness* with which He will appear.

His advent is at one time compared to a flash of lightning. Thus we find, in Matt. xxiv. 27, “As

the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." We know how suddenly a flash of lightning appears. At such a season, it may be, the clouds previously cover the heavens; there is the appearance of a gathering storm; but when and where it will burst, no one can say. In an instant, the flash is seen lighting up the heavens. Thus our Lord will come.

In another passage, the advent of our Lord is compared to a snare which suddenly entraps the prey. How unexpected is this! The unsuspecting bird, it may be, is singing among the branches, not anticipating any evil. She invites her brood to descend and take some small particle of food, which her maternal eye has discerned upon the grass. In the moment of her descent, with all her young about her, she finds, too late, that this tempting morsel was but a bait. She is taken in the snare, and thus falls into the hands of the fowler. Thus, again it is written, shall be the coming of the Son of man: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For *as a snare* shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke xxi, 34, 35.)

In a third place, the coming of our Lord is compared to the destruction of the old world and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. How sudden were these events! "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all." Such was the deluge! And in the narrative of the burning of Sodom, the Holy Spirit hath, in a peculiar manner, set forth how unexpectedly this awful judgment was sent. It is written, "*The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.*" Thus, when the inhabitants of Sodom awoke, they perceived nothing peculiar in the morning sky. The sun appeared with his accustomed brightness, and no evil seemed to portend the city. The inhabitants went forth to buy and sell, to eat and drink, as they had done on the preceding day. "*Then,*" it is said, at this moment of apparent calm and dazzling sunshine, "the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." "Even thus," my brethren, "shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."*

In the passage I have chosen for our present consideration, another emblem is employed; an illustration which, if possible, ought, from its

* Luke xvii. 30.

being so frequently repeated, to strike us still more forcibly. It is recorded, by the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke,* as used by the Saviour upon two different occasions, "If the goodman of the house had known what hour *the thief* would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." St. Paul, too, in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, writes thus: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a *thief in the night*." St. Peter, also, in his Second General Epistle, declares, that "the day of the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." And we read, in the admonition of our Lord to the angel of the Church in Sardis, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee *as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." When this remarkable similitude occurs in our text, it is with this additional emphasis, that the whole sentence bursts upon us with the suddenness of the midnight robber. To this point I have already directed your attention. This emphatic warning occurs,

* Matt. xxiv. 43. Luke xii. 39.

you perceive, in the midst of the description given by St. John of the pouring out of the sixth vial of the wrath of God. At the moment when "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" are being gathered together by "the spirits of devils working miracles," "to the battle of the great day of God Almighty," a cry is suddenly heard, like the voice of a trumpet, from the Bridegroom of the Church, "*Behold, I come as a thief.*" This call to His professing followers comes as unexpectedly as the entrance of a thief into the peaceful dwelling of a slumbering householder.

It is by these repeated declarations, and by these striking emblems, that the suddenness of the advent of our blessed Lord is declared. Oh! that the Holy Spirit, of his infinite mercy and goodness, would deeply impress our minds with this important truth; so that, instead of being like those to whom the Lord shall come unawares, we may be of that happy number who are making ready for his appearing, and who, when He does come, shall be able to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

II. Let us now attend to the counsel given by our

Lord in connexion with the sudden announcement of his coming: *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*

The first part of the description here presented, *Blessed is he that watcheth*, fully accords with the counsel which our Lord had previously given to his disciples in his remarkable prophecy delivered upon the Mount of Olives: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."*

The same counsel is given by the apostles of our Lord, St. Peter and St. Paul: "The end of all things is at hand: *be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*"† "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; *but let us watch and be sober.*"‡ The word *sober* not only includes such a temperance in diet that the body be not overcharged with surfeiting or excess of wine, but it more especially

* Mark xiii. 35—37. See also Matt. xxiv. 42; and xxv. 13. Luke xxi. 36.

† 1 Pet. iv. 7.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 4—6.

refers to sobriety of mind ; or to that temperament which preserves its possessor from worldly care and anxiety, from that eager desire for earthly objects which acts like an intoxicating potion. Against this the Lord would caution his followers. As He grants, so he directs them to seek after "the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" a discreet and chastened judgment, not elevated by temporary success, or cast down by unforeseen difficulties ; but a spirit kept in a state, quick to apprehend, and prompt to execute, whatever may be required in the service of the Lord.

That the mind should be so disciplined is of great moment ; for it is not a sudden flash of ardour, or a hasty ebullition of fiery zeal that will suffice. A Christian soldier has counted the cost in the retirement of his closet. There he makes his calculation ; and there he deliberately reckons "all things but dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." He is not surprised by difficulties, or turned aside by temporary reverses. He pursues his steady course, following the great Captain of his salvation "through evil report and good report." He does not imagine the sky will be always clear, but, like an experienced mariner, without foreboding evil, he provides for future storms.

This sobriety is the more requisite at the

present time for the faithful followers of Christ to obviate the prejudice which is sometimes entertained against those who obey the command of the inspired apostle, to "take heed to the more sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." While these prejudices have, to a certain extent, been promoted by the crude, fanciful, and visionary interpretations of some rash expositors of this mysterious book, it should ever be borne in mind, that among the students of prophecy have been found the most wise and the most holy of the servants of the Lord. It was the prophet Daniel, the prime minister of the monarch of Babylon, a counsellor whom his royal master "in all matters of wisdom and understanding found ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm;"—it was this wise man, a man of prayer, one "greatly beloved" of the Lord, who, by his diligent study of the prophetic books, understood the time when the Lord would deliver his people from captivity; and who, as a true patriot, set himself to prayer for this desirable object. In this study others, also, of the eminent servants of the Lord, both under the Old and the New Testament dispensations, have been deeply engaged. The inspired prophets of the olden time, not satisfied with delivering the heavenly oracles to the Jewish people, "inquired and searched diligently

what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow.”

Of these things I remind you, my beloved friends, lest any individual present should entertain the feeling to which I have referred. Let such an one be assured, that, when this study is pursued, as it was by the prophet Daniel, with earnest prayer to God for Divine teaching—and this, my beloved brethren, is the mode we would most strongly recommend—there is not any employment which has a greater tendency to enlarge the mind, to humble the spirit, to sanctify the affections, and to elevate the soul, than the careful study of the writings of the inspired prophets. These portions of Holy Writ are among the most choice gifts of God to His most honoured servants, bestowed when they enjoyed the most intimate communion and fellowship with the Lord.*

Be sober, then, my beloved brethren; let your spirit and conversation be such as to manifest that your high esteem for the prophetic Scriptures has not arisen from a momentary impression, but is the result of a diligent study of the oracles of God, with earnest prayer for Divine instruction.

I pass on, however, to the express language of

* See Dan. ix. 20, &c.; Jer. xxxii. 16 to the end; Rev. i. 10.

our text—"Blessed is he that WATCHETH." This admonition extends beyond sobriety of mind; the latter referring to the inward frame, the former to the outward conduct. Be vigilant. Stand upon your watch-tower. Mark the movements of the enemy. Think not you are safe because you have obtained partial success, nor vainly imagine that, having passed the day securely, the night will not have its dangers. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him *immediately*."

This vigilant spirit, in regard to the coming of our Lord, implies *the expectation* of this great event. For men are not set to look for the arrival of a person who is not expected; nor do we watch for the coming of a friend, when no intimation has been given concerning his approach. Here, therefore, it is understood, that from the study of the sacred Scriptures, and from an assured faith in their truth as the Word of God, an expectation is wrought in the mind that this event will undoubtedly happen; that "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry;" and, that "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

There is also implied a consciousness of the *un-*

certainty of the hour in which this event may happen. Although esteem for a friend we love may, long before the time, beget an earnest desire for his arrival, it is not until near the day he has fixed for coming that we expect his approach. When, therefore, it is said, "*Blessed is he that watcheth,*" it implies a consciousness of uncertainty as to the time when the event shall come to pass. He may come in the first, or the second, or the third watch. He hath not so precisely fixed the very time that we can say at what moment He will arrive. It may be "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning." I must, therefore, be watching; for I cannot say when it will be.

An *earnest longing for His appearance* is also implied; so that in the anticipation of His coming we are led to watch the movements of His Providence, and feel the time to be long while He is absent. The believer will say, "Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Or he will partake of the spirit of David, when he said, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say more than they that watch for the morning." Until the Lord shall appear it is night time with the Church; and she longs for the day; she watches for the streaks of the early dawn, and is

ready to hail with gladness the first tokens of the coming of her Lord. As when some very dear friend is expected the eye almost involuntarily turns, when the hour of his arrival draws near, toward the quarter from whence it is believed he will come, so he who *watches* is longing for the advent of his Lord. He loves His appearing." He says from his inmost soul, "Come quickly. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Such, beloved friends, will be the state of mind of one who partakes of this blessed character. Oh ! that this may be the spirit in which every one now present may be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

All that I have stated is implied in the expression, "*Blessed is he that watcheth.*" But it is not the whole. The counsel given by our Lord, like an order from a great military commander, is short, but most expressive. A single word, "*Watch !*" but this one term contains a volume. For it includes not only this diligent preparation for His coming, but a spirit of constant vigilance. That we watch the providences of God, so as to meet the Lord in His ways; that we watch the first risings of sin in the heart, so as to check it in the very germ; that we watch against whatever may "grieve the Holy Spirit;" since it is by His active grace, that the spiritual life is begun, maintained,

and advanced; and that we watch, in a very special manner, against the dangers with which the Church of Christ is encompassed. And who, my beloved friends, can measure the extent of these dangers in these "perilous times?"

To mention only a very few of them. The danger, for instance, of self-deception. At all times we are exposed to this from the deceitful workings of the human heart. In the present day, however, there is a peculiar liability for persons to be deceived. The prejudices against the preaching of the Gospel, which existed some few years since, are, with regard at least to its general statements, much lessened. The spread of Divine truth among the higher and middle classes has given a greater respectability to an open profession of religion. The numerous Societies also having a religious object in view, but not requiring any qualification in their members beside an annual subscription, have a tendency to promote this self-deception. A person constantly hearing the truths of the Gospel, attending the meetings of religious Institutions, mixing with sincere Christians, to whose society he becomes attached from their mild and gentle manners, and engaging with them in their benevolent objects, will frequently entertain a certain self-approbation, which is quite consistent with the feelings of the natural man, but which the

individual himself may mistake for true spirituality of mind. As, therefore, scarcely anything in the present day is more easy than to make a profession of religion, so few things are more easy than to be deceived by such a profession. It should, therefore, be strongly borne in mind, that conversion is not a mere outward act; it is an inward change of the soul. The thoughts and desires, the hopes and fears, the pleasures and sorrows, of a converted man are all changed. Let each, then, ask himself, in what period of his course a change like this has taken place. For, excepting those who have received the grace of God in their very tender years, all who have lived according to the general course of the world will be able to trace a season, more or less distinctly marked, when such a change occurred. They will recollect, for instance, that at such a time they entered into their closets, and, with an earnestness they had never felt before, prayed to the Lord to forgive their sins, to enlighten their understandings, to give them a new heart, and to impart therewith strength to run in the ways of His commandments.

Another danger to which the hearers of the Gospel are exposed in the present day is, a departure "from the simplicity that is in Christ," or from the plain simple truth as it is in Jesus.

We find, that very early in the Christian Church there were these departures from the faith. We perceive either a Judaizing spirit, requiring the Gentiles to observe the Mosaical ceremonies; or a philosophizing spirit, corrupting the truth with the false wisdom of men; or a sectarian spirit rending asunder the bond of peace under different leaders. To departures like these we are especially exposed in the present day. We need, therefore, to be reminded of the solemn words addressed by St. Paul to the Churches in Galatia, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." The revelation that God has made to man comprises the strongest arguments and the most powerful motives that can be devised. And it is well deserving remark, that, in examining the addresses delivered by St. Paul to persons of very different stations in life and of various dispositions, namely, the prejudiced Jews, the polite Athenians, the luxuriant inhabitants of Ephesus, and the superstitious Lycaonians, we find, that, although the introductory parts of his discourses vary, the conclusion of all is the same. He calls all to repentance. He preaches the Lord Jesus Christ once

crucified, but now risen from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, as the only ground of salvation, the only Mediator between God and man, the only source of inward sanctification, the only Hope of everlasting life.

The spirit of the age, my beloved friends, and the prevalence of false teachers, expose us in a peculiar manner to the danger of departing from this primitive simplicity. It would, however, occupy too much of your time further to dwell upon these distressing errors. Enough has been said to show the need we have to watch. I only add therefore, what is especially included in the counsel of our Lord, the watching *unto prayer*. Without this accompaniment our vigilance would be like that of an infant watching the inroads of an army. We find these graces constantly united. Our Lord said to His disciples, “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;*” and again, “*Watch ye therefore, and pray alway, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*” It was the neglect of this all-important charge which led Peter to deny his Lord, and the other disciples to flee from him. It well demands our notice, that, in the night in which our Lord was betrayed, although the disciples enjoyed such privileges as none but themselves

ever possessed; though they conversed with our Lord as with a friend; though they received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, administered to them by the Saviour Himself; though they united with Him when He offered up His most beautiful intercessory prayer, yet still forgetting His word, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,*" during that very night they all fell into sin: they either denied their Lord or forsook Him.

It would be difficult for us to set too high an estimate upon prayer. It is the great moral means that God, in His wisdom and goodness, has provided for imparting blessings to his people. It is their distinguishing grace. We read, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" It gives to them the strength of Omnipotence; for it contains a force which, if we may use the expression, the Almighty Himself cannot resist. These were His words to His servant Moses, "*I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: NOW THEREFORE LET ME ALONE, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.*"* "Let me alone," as if, had Moses continued in fervent supplication, he would have exercised a power which the Lord could not withstand.

How encouraging an example of the blessing of

* Exodus xxxii. 9, 10.

a prayerful spirit does the history of the Prophet Daniel afford! "*At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.*"* Not only was his prayer for the deliverance of his people answered, but far more was granted to him than he had asked. The period was revealed to him at which Messiah was to come "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Time would fail me to describe the blessedness of prayer. It, more than anything else, brings man to his becoming posture as a poor, weak, needy, helpless sinner. Prayer, at the same time, especially honours God; for it manifests His omnipotence, His providential care, His beneficent goodness, and overflowing bounty; His tender sympathy and parental compassion. Prayer, we may also add, especially glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is through Him alone that our petitions find access to God. It is the merit of His one offering, the sweet savour of His intercession, the love His Father bears unto Him, and His hearing Him at all times, which cause our broken supplications to be accepted. Yes, it is because "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," that we

* Daniel ix. 23.

have boldness in drawing nigh to the throne of grace; for we are assured, that through Him we shall "obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need."

Oh, that the Lord would grant to us, my beloved friends, "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," so as to make prayer our delight, and communion with Him our sweet employment, counting the moments we spend with our God the most choice and the most blessed of our lives.

III. I must pass on to the latter part of the counsel, "Blessed is he that watcheth, *and keepeth his garments.*"

This expression is considered to have an allusion to the service of the temple. It was customary for the Levites, during the night, to guard the different entrances of the temple; and for this purpose, twenty-four wards, or companies, were set. To see that they properly performed the service, one was appointed as the provost, called the man of the mountain of the house of God. He went round about unto every ward, during the night, with torches burning before him; and every warder that did not say, "Thou man of the mountain of the house, peace be unto thee," it was known that he was asleep, and he did beat him with his staff, and burn his garment. So that sometimes they said in

Jerusalem, "What noise is in the court?" and they answered, "It is the cry of a Levite who is beaten, and has had his garments burnt, because he slept at his watch."* We may easily conceive with what shame he would appear when morning came. He would be seen with his garments burnt, and the skirts stripped off, so that all who beheld him would know that he had neglected his duty, and slept at his post. In contrast to these slumbering Levites, our Lord pronounces a blessing upon those who, like the watchful warders, kept their garments.

The emblem is one of great force in its application to the garments of salvation. These consist, first, of the robe of righteousness which the Saviour has wrought out for our justification before God, by his obedience unto death; a garment which is freely bestowed upon all who believe in His name. The other, the robe of sanctification; the garment of an inward purification of the soul, and of that holy conversation before men which becometh the Gospel. The one robe is that which is made white by the blood of the Lamb; the other is that which is adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit.

By keeping these garments, we may understand preserving them in their purity, according to the charge given to the angel of the Church of Sardis, "Thou hast a few names, *which have not defiled*

* See the works of Lightfoot, vol. i. p. 919.

their garments, and they shall walk with me in white;" or, as this emblem is employed by St. Jude, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating *even the garment spotted by the flesh.*" Keeping the garments, therefore, includes in it a continual application to the precious blood of Christ, and to the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit. It implies, also, a wariness in avoiding the defilements of sin; diligence in improving the means of grace; and carefulness in walking with God. As well might any one suppose he could walk through the streets of this metropolis in the winter season and keep every part of his dress free from spots, as the Christian imagine he could mix unreservedly in the prevailing course of this world, and keep his garments white. He considers, therefore, if we may so speak, that he is attired in his court-dress; that he is wearing the robes in which he is to appear before the King; and, therefore, he walks circumspectly. He carefully shuns whatever is of a polluting nature; and while he trusts altogether in the merit of the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he remembers that it is written, "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*"

All this, my Christian friends, is included in

watching and keeping the garments; and blessed, yea, truly blessed, is that believer who is thus waiting for his Lord. So our text declares, "*BLESSED is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments;*" for he is delivered from those fears and anxieties which often fill the minds of the worldly; sources of distress, which will more and more increase as the coming of our Lord draweth nigh. For, while men who have cast off all restraint may "have their consciences seared as with a hot iron," so that, like the unjust judge, they "fear not God, nor regard man," those who attend the services of the Church, who occasionally read the Holy Bible, and who meet from time to time with truly consistent Christians, cannot but have inward misgivings. They will say to themselves at times, How will it be with me when He who once appeared in our nature and tabernacled on earth, shall come again as He hath promised, "to be glorified in His saints," and, "to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?" How can I meet Him? My principles and my conduct proclaim, that I am not among His friends. It must, therefore, be a dreadful meeting to me. These thoughts oppress the mind, and produce much inward distress. It is not very long since a nobleman of high rank, surrounded by apparent gaiety and external splendour, took

the opportunity of a momentary absence of his usual acquaintances to confess to a casual godly visitor, "I have the forebodings of death upon me, and I am, at this moment, miserable beyond expression. Can you tell me how to obtain any consolation?"

From these agitating fears, those who are watching for the coming of their Lord, and keeping their garments, are graciously delivered. For why should they fear? Have they not fled for refuge to their coming Saviour? Is He not their Friend and their Redeemer? Has He not engaged never to leave them nor forsake them? And hath He not promised, that they shall "sit with Him upon His throne, even as He is set down with His Father in His throne?"

This, however, is only a part of the blessedness of the true followers of our Lord. They have the delightful anticipation of the "glory to be revealed" frequently presented to their minds. For, if he who is watching for the arrival of a friend, not only looks toward the place from whence he is coming, but refreshes his spirit with thoughts of the pleasure of the meeting, of the sight of his friend, of the joy of his countenance, of the sweet communion and fellowship to be possessed in his society; so it is with those who are waiting for the coming of their Lord. They are often meditating

upon the blessedness of that day. They frequently revolve in their minds such declarations as these: "*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory:*" and again, "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*" We shall be *like Him* in our outward frames; for He "will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." We shall be *like Him*, also, in the inner man, being entirely conformed to His image, in knowledge and righteousness and true holiness; loving God with our whole souls, and delighting in Him as our God; yea, our Father and our Friend for ever and ever.

Thus, ere the blessed day actually comes, a true Christian hath a foretaste of its joy: "for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." To him, therefore, the sweet promise is, in a measure, fulfilled, that his days shall be "*as the days of Heaven upon earth.*" Filled with bright hope, his joyful soul speeds on its heavenly way; and while the Redeemer sitteth upon His throne, expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool, he longs to see Him, and be with Him for evermore.

Hence it is, my beloved friends, that you will generally see those Christians who are most watchful, and most prayerful, and whose eyes are

most frequently directed toward their home, men of cheerful spirits. For they know by experience the truth of the Word, "*Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.*"

PERMIT me, then, in conclusion, especially to recommend the established believer deeply to ponder and to pray over the words of the text. Far be it from me to wish to occupy your thoughts with vain or fanciful speculations; but I would earnestly entreat you to be of that blessed company who are "*watching, and keeping their garments.*" I desire it for your own present happiness, being convinced that there is an indescribable force in that word in the text, "*Blessed.*" Watchfulness is the very state in which the true followers of our Lord have been, when they have enjoyed most of the consolations of the Holy Spirit. Thus favoured, they feel they require but one thing, the presence of their Lord. The frowns of the world distress them not; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The cares of the world disturb them not; for He who is coming to put an end to every care hath said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The pleasures of the world tempt them not; for "in thy presence is fulness

of joy ; and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Oh ! then, my beloved Christian brethren, as the early believers were those who had their conversation in Heaven, who were "looking for the coming,"* "praying for the coming,"† "hoping for the coming,"‡ "waiting for the coming,"§ of the Lord Jesus ; so, in these latter days, let it be your care especially to take heed to His warning, "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*"

That this may become, more and more, the habit of your mind, let me recommend to you a *sober study* of the Word of God. I say, *sober*, meaning by this, that we should take His Word in its proper character, as that Book which can alone guide our feet into the way of peace. Oh, my friends, how ought we to value the Bible in the present day ! It is the only volume which can impart true wisdom to the mind, and real consolation to the heart. Sometimes we are asked, what book we would recommend an inquirer after truth to peruse. We answer, THE BIBLE. Read more of THE WORD OF GOD, and less of the word of man. Read the Bible, soberly, constantly, patiently, diligently. Read the Bible with earnest prayer for Divine teaching. Read it as

* Titus ii. 13. † Rev. xxii. 20. ‡ 1 John iii. 1—3.

§ 1 Thess. i. 10.

that Book of which our Saviour saith, "*The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.*" The more attentively it is thus perused, the more will its matchless excellence be seen.

What adoring wonder should this blessed Book inspire! In the prophecies of Daniel, we have a scheme unfolded, which has already embraced a period of above three thousand seven hundred years, including in it the great empires of the world. It takes in shorter and more lengthened periods; some already fulfilled, and others which appear on the eve of accomplishment. When the mind traces the different links of this vast chain, and beholds them all interwoven with one glorious purpose, surely we must admire the wisdom, the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God. The soul rises with the survey, and is ready to exclaim, How happy is that man whose faith is built on so sure a rock! Again, therefore, would I recommend a sober study of the Word of God, and with it a sober attention to passing events: not yielding to ardent feelings, or to the hasty conclusions of a lively imagination; nor construing trivial occurrences as the direct fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the latter days; but coolly and deliberately to exercise a prayerful judgment upon the events the Providence of God brings before us. To be like the Prophet Habakkuk,

who said, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."

How delightful it is, my beloved friends, to refresh our spirits by reflecting upon the perfect confidence and quiet composure of mind with which the true Christian may watch the steps of the Great Ruler of the universe. All the events set forth in prophecy are ordered to promote the advancement of the kingdom of God, and the final happiness of His people. At the coming of the Son of man, there will, indeed, "be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." But this awful period is the season concerning which our Lord hath said, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." The very events which will bring dismay to the hearts of scoffers and Infidels, and mere time-serving professors, are the occurrences which will bring joy and gladness to the faithful followers of our Lord.

Yes, my beloved Christian friends, we have no cause for fear; for "greater is He that is for us,

than they that are against us." "Our Redeemer is mighty : the Lord of Hosts is His name." He is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." And "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

LET me, further, with the authority of a father, and the affection of a friend, the desire of whose heart is your salvation, who would not see one individual in this large assembly in danger, without stretching out his hand, if possible, to rescue him,—Let me, I say, should there be any present who have not yet sincerely cast themselves at the feet of our Lord, now persuade you to flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel. It is not yet too late ; but still the Lord waiteth to be gracious. His Word still is, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" Oh, then, "Seek the Lord while He may be found ; call upon Him while He is near."

To all present I would say, View this Course of Lectures in their proper light ; as a response from the servants of the Lord on earth, to the awakening warning which He is at this time giving by His Word, by His Spirit, and by His Providence, from Heaven : "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*" Oh !

that the Lord may thus incline every heart !
 , May there not be an individual present hardy enough to neglect the warning ; but, touched in his inmost soul by the love of Christ in sending the message, animated by the hope that it has not come too late, and earnestly desiring to partake of the blessings the saints will enjoy in that great day, may each for himself say, "*Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people : O visit me with thy salvation !*" Yea, not me only, but every individual now in the house of God. Oh ! may we all "see the good of thy chosen, rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance."

NOR can I conclude without offering up a fervent prayer, in which I entreat all present to unite, that the "God of all grace" may, for the sake of His dear Son, follow this Course of Lectures with His special blessing, and vouchsafe to His servant, in whose Church they have been delivered, the rich abundance of His grace. May "the Lord grant unto him," not only "that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day," but be honoured to appear before Him with many, yea, very many of his parishioners, as his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming."

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from

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falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

FINIS.

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